


ACADEMY CLASSICS

ESSAYS  
IN  
CRITICISM  
—  
ARNOLD

ALLYN AND BACON

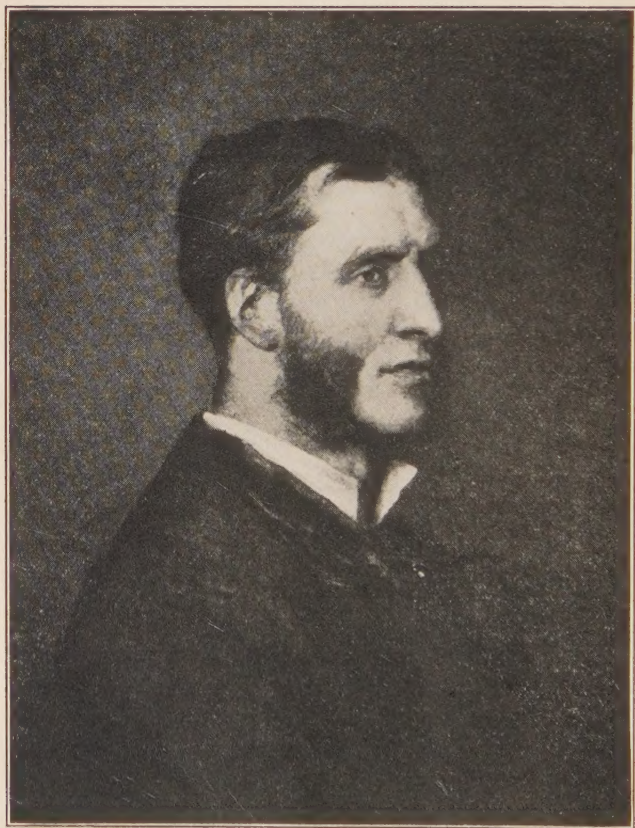


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MATTHEW ARNOLD



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ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

INCLUDING THE ESSAY ON WORDSWORTH  
WITH A BRIEF SELECTION FROM  
WORDSWORTH'S POEMS

ALSO THE ESSAYS ON THE STUDY OF POETRY AND ON KEATS  
WITH SELECTIONS FROM ARNOLD'S AND KEATS' POEMS

EDITED BY

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NEW HAVEN HIGH SCHOOL, NEW HAVEN, CONN.



ALLYN AND BACON

BOSTON

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## PREFACE.

IF the Apostle of Sweetness and Light be studied simply because he is the Apostle of Culture, he will be most helpful to the young people of this practical age, — this age in which the tendency is toward commercialism. But add to this the strong points of the author's style, the delicacy of touch, the clear incisive analysis, the energy of purpose — with the *gentle man* behind it all, — the constant endeavor to stimulate to something higher and nobler, and the value of such study cannot be estimated.

This book has been arranged so as to meet the college entrance requirement which asks for the reading of Arnold's Wordsworth, with a brief selection from Wordsworth's poems.

These poems of Wordsworth are an addition to the original printing of *Essays in Criticism*. Along with them it has been thought best to add selections from the poetry of Keats and of Arnold himself. The result is a book which gives the pupil opportunity to judge the authors from their own writings as well as from what the critic writes of them, while the poems of the critic himself will add interest to the volume.

There are notes to accompany all the essays and poems.

SUSAN S. SHERIDAN.

NEW HAVEN HIGH SCHOOL,  
March 1, 1923.



# CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	vii

## ESSAYS.

THE STUDY OF POETRY . . . . .	1
JOHN KEATS . . . . .	32
WORDSWORTH . . . . .	44

## ARNOLD'S POEMS.

RUGBY CHAPEL . . . . .	67
DOVER BEACH . . . . .	73
THE FORSAKEN MERMAN . . . . .	74
BALDER DEAD . . . . .	79

## KEATS' POEMS.

ODE ON A GRECIAN URN . . . . .	117
ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER . . . . .	118
THE HUMAN SEASONS . . . . .	119
THE MERMAID TAVERN . . . . .	119
ODE ON THE POETS . . . . .	120

## WORDSWORTH'S POEMS.

### SONNETS —

A POET . . . . .	122
THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US . . . . .	122
NUNS FRET NOT . . . . .	123
MILTON! THOU SHOULD'ST BE LIVING AT THIS HOUR . . . . .	123
COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE . . . . .	124
TO TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE . . . . .	124

WORDSWORTH'S POEMS — *continued.*

## LYRICS —

	PAGE
WE ARE SEVEN . . . . .	125
THE TABLES TURNED . . . . .	127
CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WARRIOR . . . . .	128
TO A SKY-LARK . . . . .	131
EXTRACT FROM ODE ON IMMORTALITY . . . . .	132
TO A BUTTERFLY . . . . .	132
THE DAFFODILS . . . . .	133
TO THE DAISY . . . . .	134

## NOTES.

THE STUDY OF POETRY . . . . .	137
THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH AND KEATS . . . . .	145
KEATS . . . . .	148
WORDSWORTH . . . . .	156
THE LAKE POETS . . . . .	160
ARNOLD'S POEMS . . . . .	167
KEATS' POEMS . . . . .	171
WORDSWORTH'S POEMS . . . . .	173

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

MATTHEW ARNOLD . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
JOHN KEATS . . . . .	<i>Facing page</i> 32
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH . . . . .	<i>Facing page</i> 44

## INTRODUCTION.

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THE following passage from Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* shows "the corner stone of his critical building":—

"The pursuit of perfection, then, is the pursuit of sweetness and light. He who works for sweetness and light works to make reason and the will of God prevail. He who works for machinery, he who works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has one great passion—the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater—the passion for making them *prevail*. It is not satisfied till we *all* come to a perfect man; it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light. If I have not shrunk from saying that we must work for sweetness and light, so neither have I shrunk from saying that we must have a broad basis, must have sweetness and light for as many as possible. Again and again I have insisted how those are the happy moments of humanity, how those are the marking epochs of a people's life, how those are the flowering times for literature and art and all the creative power of genius, when there is a *national* glow of life and thought, when the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive. Only it must be *real* thought and *real* beauty, *real* sweetness and *real* light. Plenty of people will try to give the masses, as they call them, an intellectual food prepared and adapted in the way they think proper for the actual condition of the masses. The ordinary popular literature is an example of this way of working on the masses. Plenty of people will try to indoctrinate the masses with the set of ideas and judgments constituting the creed of their own profession or party. Our religious and political organizations give an example of this way of working on the masses. I condemn neither way; but culture

works differently. It does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely — nourished, and not bound, by them."

The following extract shows the ground on which Arnold took his stand as a critic:—

"It is of the last importance that English criticism should clearly discern what rule for its course, in order to avail itself of the field now opening to it, and to produce fruit for the future, it ought to take. The rule may be summed up in one word, — *disinterestedness*. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things'; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country, at any rate, are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism has really nothing to do with. Its business is, as I have said, simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas." — *Function of Criticism at Present Time*.

For more extended study of Matthew Arnold, see:

#### 1. BOOKS OF REFERENCE.

*Westminster Review*. October, 1863.

*North British Review*. March–June, 1865.

*British Quarterly Review*. October, 1865.

*Macmillan's Magazine*. August, 1867.

Hutton: *Essays in Literary Criticism*.

*Pall Mall Gazette*. April 19, 1888 (Memorial number).

*Century Magazine*. June, 1888.

*Scribner's Magazine*. November, 1888.

*The Critic*. April 28, 1888.

## 2. SELECTIONS FROM ARNOLD'S PROSE.

- On Translating Homer.* Part III. (Classical.)  
*The Testimony of Jesus to Himself.* (Religious.)  
*Literature and Dogma.* Chap. 7, Parts III.-V. (Religious.)  
*Barbarians, Philistines, Populace.* (Social.)  
*Culture and Anarchy.* Chap. III. (Social.)  
*My Countrymen.* — *Friendship's Garland.* (Political.)  
*A Speech at Eton.* — *Irish Essays.* (Educational.)  
*Emerson.* A Lecture. (Literary.)

## SIGNIFICANT FACTS IN THE LIFE OF MATTHEW ARNOLD.

1822-1888.

The Son of Arnold of Rugby. [See *Tom Brown at Rugby.*]

Winner of Newdigate Prize at Oxford. 1843.

Friendship with Arthur Hugh Clough.

Publication of *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* by A. 1849.<sup>1</sup>

The Professorship of Poetry at Oxford. 1857-1867.

Honorary Degrees of LL.D. Edinburgh, 1869; Oxford, 1870; Cambridge, 1880.

Foreign Missions in Behalf of Education. 1859-1860, 1865, 1885.

NOTE. — An excellent sketch of Arnold's life may be found in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of April 19, 1888.

Two volumes of *Letters* of Arnold have just been published by Macmillan.

<sup>1</sup> The number of works published by Arnold is twenty. The dividing line between Arnold's poetic and prose career may be placed at the time of his resignation of his chair at Oxford. Arnold was an essayist, a poet, an educationalist, and a theological writer.

— Adapted from *Nineteenth Century Authors*,  
by LOUISE MANNING HODGKINS.





# ESSAYS IN CRITICISM.



## THE STUDY OF POETRY.<sup>1</sup>

“THE future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry.”

Let me be permitted to quote these words of my own, as uttering the thought which should, in my opinion, go with us and govern us in all our study of poetry. In the present work it is the course of one great contributory stream to the world-river of poetry that we are invited to follow. We are here invited to trace the stream of English poetry. But whether we set ourselves, as here, to follow only one of the several streams that make the mighty river of poetry, or whether we seek to know them all, our governing thought

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1880 as the General Introduction to *The English Poets*, edited by T. H. Ward.

should be the same. We should conceive of poetry more fully, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science"; and what is a countenance without its expression? Again, Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge": our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize "the breath and finer spirit of knowledge" offered to us by poetry.

But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence. We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment. Sainte-Beuve relates that Napoleon one day said, when somebody was spoken of in his presence as a charlatan: "Charlatan as much as you please; but where is there *not* charlatanism?" — "Yes," answers Sainte-Beuve, "in politics, in the art of governing mankind, that is perhaps true. But in the order of thought, in art, the glory, the eternal

honour is that charlatanism shall find no entrance; herein lies the inviolableness of that noble portion of man's being." It is admirably said, and let us hold fast to it. In poetry, which is thought and art in one, it is the glory, the eternal honour, that charlatanism shall find no entrance; that this noble sphere be kept inviolate and inviolable. Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true. It is charlatanism, conscious or unconscious, whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry, more than anywhere else, it is unpermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance. It is of paramount importance because of the high destinies of poetry. In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay. But the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power in proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent rather than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half-sound, true rather than untrue or half-true.

The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can. A clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, is the most precious benefit which we can gather from a poetical collection such as the present. And yet in the very nature and conduct of such a collection there is inevitably something which tends to obscure in us the consciousness of what our benefit should be, and to distract us from the pursuit of it. We should therefore steadily set it

before our minds at the outset, and should compel ourselves to revert constantly to the thought of it as we proceed.

Yes; constantly in reading poetry, a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read. But this real estimate, the only true one, is liable to be superseded, if we are not watchful, by two other kinds of estimate, the historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious. A poet or a poem may count to us historically, they may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves, and they may count to us really. They may count to us historically. The course of development of a nation's language, thought, and poetry, is profoundly interesting; and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is, we may come to use a language of quite exaggerated praise in criticising it; in short, to over-rate it. So arises in our poetic judgments the fallacy caused by the estimate which we may call historic. Then, again, a poet or a poem may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves. Our personal affinities, likings, and circumstances, have great power to sway our estimate of this or that poet's work, and to make us attach more importance to it as poetry than in itself it really possesses, because to us it is, or has been, of high importance. Here also we over-rate the object of our interest, and apply to it a language of praise which is quite exaggerated. And thus we get the source of a second fallacy in our poetic judgments—the fallacy caused by an estimate which we may call personal.

Both fallacies are natural. It is evident how naturally the study of the history and development of a poetry may incline a man to pause over reputations and works once conspicuous but now obscure, and to quarrel with a careless public for skipping, in obedience to mere tradition and

habit, from one famous name or work in its national poetry to another, ignorant of what it misses, and of the reason for keeping what it keeps, and of the whole process of growth in its poetry. The French have become diligent students of their own early poetry, which they long neglected; the study makes many of them dissatisfied with their so-called classical poetry, the court-tragedy of the seventeenth century, a poetry which Pellisson long ago reproached with its want of the true poetic stamp, with its *politesse stérile et rampante*, but which nevertheless has reigned in France as absolutely as if it had been the perfection of classical poetry indeed. The dissatisfaction is natural; yet a lively and accomplished critic, M. Charles d'Héricault, the editor of Clément Marot, goes too far when he says that "the cloud of glory playing round a classic is a mist as dangerous to the future of a literature as it is intolerable for the purposes of history." "It hinders," he goes on, "it hinders us from seeing more than one single point, the culminating and exceptional point; the summary, fictitious and arbitrary, of a thought and of a work. It substitutes a halo for a physiognomy, it puts a statue where there was once a man, and hiding from us all trace of the labour, the attempts, the weaknesses, the failures, it claims not study but veneration; it does not show us how the thing is done, it imposes upon us a model. Above all, for the historian this creation of classic personages is inadmissible; for it withdraws the poet from his time, from his proper life, it breaks historical relationships, it blinds criticism by conventional admiration, and renders the investigation of literary origins unacceptable. It gives us a human personage no longer, but a God seated immovable amidst His perfect work, like Jupiter on Olympus; and hardly will it be possible for the young student, to whom such work is exhibited at such a distance from him, to believe that it did not issue ready made from that divine head."

All this is brilliantly and tellingly said, but we must plead for a distinction. Everything depends on the reality of a poet's classic character. If he is a dubious classic, let us sift him; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best (for this is the true and right meaning of the word *classic, classical*), then the great thing for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can, and to appreciate the wide difference between it and all work which has not the same high character. This is what is salutary, this is what is formative; this is the great benefit to be got from the study of poetry. Everything which interferes with it, which hinders it, is injurious. True, we must read our classic with open eyes, and not with eyes blinded with superstition; we must perceive when his work comes short, when it drops out of the class of the very best, and we must rate it, in such cases, at its proper value. But the use of this negative criticism is not in itself, it is entirely in its enabling us to have a clearer sense and a deeper enjoyment of what is truly excellent. To trace the labour, the attempts, the weaknesses, the failures of a genuine classic, to acquaint oneself with his time and his life and his historical relationships, is mere literary dilettantism unless it has that clear sense and deeper enjoyment for its end. It may be said that the more we know about a classic the better we shall enjoy him; and, if we lived as long as Methuselah and had all of us heads of perfect clearness and wills of perfect steadfastness, this might be true in fact as it is plausible in theory. But the case here is much the same as the case with the Greek and Latin studies of our schoolboys. The elaborate philological groundwork which we require them to lay is in theory an admirable preparation for appreciating the Greek and Latin authors worthily. The more thoroughly we lay the groundwork, the better we shall be able, it may be said, to enjoy the authors. True, if time were not so



short, and schoolboys' wits not so soon tired and their power of attention exhausted; only, as it is, the elaborate philological preparation goes on, but the authors are little known and less enjoyed. So with the investigator of "historic origins" in poetry. He ought to enjoy the true classic all the better for his investigations; he often is distracted from the enjoyment of the best, and with the less good he overbusies himself, and is prone to over-rate it in proportion to the trouble which it has cost him.

The idea of tracing historic origins and historical relationships cannot be absent from a compilation like the present. And naturally the poets to be exhibited in it will be assigned to those persons for exhibition who are known to prize them highly, rather than to those who have no special inclination towards them. Moreover the very occupation with an author, and the business of exhibiting him, disposes us to affirm and amplify his importance. In the present work, therefore, we are sure of frequent temptation to adopt the historic estimate, or the personal estimate, and to forget the real estimate; which latter, nevertheless, we must employ if we are to make poetry yield us its full benefit. So high is that benefit, the benefit of clearly feeling and of deeply enjoying the really excellent, the truly classic in poetry, that we do well, I say, to set it fixedly before our minds as our object in studying poets and poetry, and to make the desire of attaining it the one principle to which, as the *Imitation* says, whatever we may read or come to know, we always return. *Cum multa legeris et cognoveris, ad unum semper oportet redire principium.*

The historic estimate is likely in especial to affect our judgment and our language when we are dealing with ancient poets; the personal estimate when we are dealing with poets our contemporaries, or at any rate modern. The exaggerations due to the historic estimate are not in themselves, perhaps, of very much gravity. Their report hardly

enters the general ear; probably they do not always impose even on the literary men who adopt them. But they lead to a dangerous abuse of language. So we hear Cædmon, amongst our own poets, compared to Milton. I have already noticed the enthusiasm of one accomplished French critic for "historic origins." Another eminent French critic, M. Vitet, comments upon that famous document of the early poetry of his nation, the *Chanson de Roland*. It is indeed a most interesting document. The *joculator* or *jongleur* Taillefer, who was with William the Conqueror's army at Hastings, marched before the Norman troops, so said the tradition, singing "of Charlemagne and of Roland and of Oliver, and of the vassals who died at Roncevaux"; and it is suggested that in the *Chanson de Roland* by one Turol-dus or Théroulde, a poem preserved in a manuscript of the twelfth century in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, we have certainly the matter, perhaps even some of the words, of the chant which Taillefer sang. The poem has vigour and freshness; it is not without pathos. But M. Vitet is not satisfied with seeing in it a document of some poetic value, and of very high historic and linguistic value; he sees in it a grand and beautiful work, a monument of epic genius. In its general design he finds the grandiose conception, in its details he finds the constant union of simplicity with greatness, which are the marks, he truly says, of the genuine epic, and distinguish it from the artificial epic of literary ages. One thinks of Homer; this is the sort of praise which is given to Homer, and justly given. Higher praise there cannot well be, and it is the praise due to epic poetry of the highest order only, and to no other. Let us try, then, the *Chanson de Roland* at its best. Roland, mortally wounded, lays himself down under a pine-tree, with his face turned towards Spain and the enemy —

" De plusurs choses à remembrer li prist,  
De tantes teres cume li bers cunquist,

De dulce France, des humes de sun lign,  
De Carlemagne sun seignor ki l'nurrit."<sup>1</sup>

That is primitive work, I repeat, with an undeniable poetic quality of its own. It deserves such praise, and such praise is sufficient for it. But now turn to Homer —

“Ὡς φάτο· τοὺς δ' ἤδη κατέχεν φύσιζοος αἶα  
ἐν Δακεδαίμονι αὖθι, φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ.”<sup>2</sup>

We are here in another world, another order of poetry altogether; here is rightly due such supreme praise as that which M. Vitet gives to the *Chanson de Roland*. If our words are to have any meaning, if our judgments are to have any solidity, we must not heap that supreme praise upon poetry of an order immeasurably inferior.

Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry. Of course we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar. But if we have any tact we shall find them, when we have lodged them well in our minds, an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of this quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them. Short passages, even single lines, will serve our turn quite sufficiently. Take the two lines which I have just quoted from Homer, the poet's comment on Helen's mention of her brothers; — or take his

<sup>1</sup> “Then began he to call many things to remembrance, — all the lands which his valour conquered, and pleasant France, and the men of his lineage, and Charlemagne his liege lord who nourished him.” — *Chanson de Roland*, iii. 939-942.

<sup>2</sup> “So said she; they long since in Earth's soft arms were reposing,  
There, in their own dear land, their fatherland, Lacedæmon.”

*Iliad*, iii. 243, 244 (translated by Dr. Hawtrey).

Ἄ δειλὸν, τί σφῶϊ δόμεν Πηλεΐ ἄνακτι  
 θνητῇ; ὑμεῖς δ' ἐστὸν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτῳ τε.  
 ἦ ἵνα δυστήνοισι μετ' ἀνδράσιν ἄλγε' ἔχῃτον;<sup>1</sup>

the address of Zeus to the horses of Peleus;—or take finally his

Καὶ σέ, γέρον, τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἀκούομεν ὄλβιον εἶναι.<sup>2</sup>

the words of Achilles to Priam, a suppliant before him. Take that incomparable line and a half of Dante, Ugolino's tremendous words—

“Io no piangeva; sì dentro impietraì.  
 Piangevan elli . . .”<sup>3</sup>

take the lovely words of Beatrice to Virgil—

“Io son fatta da Dio, sua mercè, tale,  
 Che la vostra miseria non mi tange,  
 Nè fiamma d'esto incendio non m'assale . . .”<sup>4</sup>

take the simple, but perfect, single line—

“In la sua volontade è nostra pace.”<sup>5</sup>

Take of Shakespeare a line or two of Henry the Fourth's expostulation with sleep—

“Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast  
 Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains  
 In cradle of the rude imperious surge . . .”

and take, as well, Hamlet's dying request to Horatio—

“If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
 Absent thee from felicity awhile,

<sup>1</sup> “Ah, unhappy pair, why gave we you to King Peleus, to a mortal? but ye are without old age, and immortal. Was it that with men born to misery ye might have sorrow?”—*Iliad*, xvii. 443–445.

<sup>2</sup> “Nay, and thou too, old man, in former days wast, as we hear, happy.”—*Iliad*, xxiv. 543.

<sup>3</sup> “I wailed not, so of stone grew I within;—*they* wailed.”—*Inferno*, xxxiii. 39, 40.

<sup>4</sup> “Of such sort hath God, thanked be His mercy, made me, that your misery toucheth me not, neither doth the flame of this fire strike me.”—*Inferno*, ii. 91–93.

<sup>5</sup> “In His will is our peace.”—*Paradiso*, iii. 85.

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain  
To tell my story . . .”

Take of Milton that Miltonic passage —

“ Darken’d so, yet shone  
Above them all the archangel ; but his face  
Deep scars of thunder had intrench’d, and care  
Sat on his faded cheek . . .”

add two such lines as —

“ And courage never to submit or yield  
And what is else not to be overcome . . .”

and finish with the exquisite close to the loss of Proserpine,  
the loss

“ . . . which cost Ceres all that pain  
To seek her through the world.”

These few lines, if we have tact and can use them, are enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgments about poetry, to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate.

The specimens I have quoted differ widely from one another, but they have in common this: the possession of the very highest poetical quality. If we are thoroughly penetrated by their power, we shall find that we have acquired a sense enabling us, whatever poetry may be laid before us, to feel the degree in which a high poetical quality is present or wanting there. Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples;—to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest quality, and to say: The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*. They are far better recognised by being felt in the verse of the master, than by being perused in the prose of the critic. Nevertheless if we are urgently pressed to give some critical account of them, we may

safely, perhaps, venture on laying down, not indeed how and why the characters arise, but where and in what they arise. They are in the matter and substance of the poetry, and they are in its manner and style. Both of these, the substance and matter on the one hand, the style and manner on the other, have a mark, an accent, of high beauty, worth, and power. But if we are asked to define this mark and accent in the abstract, our answer must be: No, for we should thereby be darkening the question, not clearing it. The mark and accent are as given by the substance and matter of that poetry, by the style and manner of that poetry, and of all other poetry which is akin to it in quality.

Only one thing we may add as to the substance and matter of poetry, guiding ourselves by Aristotle's profound observation that the superiority of poetry over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and a higher seriousness (*φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον*). Let us add, therefore, to what we have said, this: that the substance and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing, in an eminent degree, truth and seriousness. We may add yet further, what is in itself evident, that to the style and manner of the best poetry their special character, their accent, is given by their diction, and, even yet more, by their movement. And though we distinguish between the two characters, the two accents, of superiority, yet they are nevertheless vitally connected one with the other. The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related, and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to

his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement, again, is absent from a poet's style and manner, we shall find, also, that high poetic truth and seriousness are absent from his substance and matter.

So stated, these are but dry general ties; their whole force lies in their application. And I could wish every student of poetry to make the application of them for himself. Made by himself, the application would impress itself upon his mind far more deeply than made by me. Neither will my limits allow me to make any full application of the generalities above propounded; but in the hope of bringing out, at any rate, some significance in them, and of establishing an important principle more firmly by their means, I will, in the space which remains to me, follow rapidly from the commencement the course of our English poetry with them in my view.

Once more I return to the early poetry of France, with which our own poetry, in its origins, is indissolubly connected. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that seed-time of all modern language and literature, the poetry of France had a clear predominance in Europe. Of the two divisions of that poetry, its productions in the *langue d'oïl* and its productions in the *langue d'oc*, the poetry of the *langue d'oc*, of southern France, of the troubadours, is of importance because of its effect on Italian literature;—the first literature of modern Europe to strike the true and grand note, and to bring forth, as in Dante and Petrarch it brought forth, classics. But the predominance of French poetry in Europe, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is due to its poetry of the *langue d'oïl*, the poetry of northern France and of the tongue which is now the French language. In the twelfth century the bloom of this romance-poetry was earlier and stronger in England, at the court of our Anglo-Norman kings, than in France itself. But it was a bloom of French poetry; and as our native



poetry formed itself, it formed itself out of this. The romance-poems which took possession of the heart and imagination of Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are French; "they are," as Southey justly says, "the pride of French literature, nor have we anything which can be placed in competition with them." Themes were supplied from all quarters; but the romance-setting which was common to them all, and which gained the ear of Europe, was French. This constituted for the French poetry, literature, and language, at the height of the Middle Age, an unchallenged predominance. The Italian Brunetto Latini, the master of Dante, wrote his *Treasure* in French because, he says, "la parleure en est plus délitable et plus commune à toutes gens." In the same century, the thirteenth, the French romance-writer, Christian of Troyes, formulates the claims, in chivalry and letters, of France, his native country, as follows:—

" Or vous ert par ce livre apris,  
 Que Gresse ot de chevalerie  
 Le premier los et de clergie ;  
 Puis vint chevalerie à Rome,  
 Et de la clergie la some,  
 Qui ore est en France venue.  
 Diex doinst qu'ele i soit retenue,  
 Et que li lius li abelisse  
 Tant que de France n'isse  
 L'onor qui s'i est arestée ! "

"Now by this book you will learn that first Greece had the renown for chivalry and letters: then chivalry and the primacy in letters passed to Rome, and now it is come to France. God grant it may be kept there; and that the place may please it so well, that the honour which has come to make stay in France may never depart thence!"

Yet it is now all gone, this French romance-poetry, of which the weight of substance and the power of style are

not unfairly represented by this extract from Christian of Troyes. Only by means of the historic estimate can we persuade ourselves now to think that any of it is of poetical importance.

But in the fourteenth century there comes an Englishman nourished on this poetry, taught his trade by this poetry, getting words, rhyme, metre from this poetry; for even of that stanza which the Italians used, and which Chaucer derived immediately from the Italians, the basis and suggestion was probably given in France. Chaucer (I have already named him) fascinated his contemporaries, but so too did Christian of Troyes and Wolfram of Eschenbach. Chaucer's power of fascination, however, is enduring; his poetical importance does not need the assistance of the historic estimate; it is real. He is a genuine source of joy and strength, which is flowing still for us and will flow always. He will be read, as time goes on, far more generally than he is read now. His language is a cause of difficulty for us; but so also, and I think in quite as great a degree, is the language of Burns. In Chaucer's case, as in that of Burns, it is a difficulty to be unhesitatingly accepted and overcome.

If we ask ourselves wherein consists the immense superiority of Chaucer's poetry over the romance-poetry — why it is that in passing from this to Chaucer we suddenly feel ourselves to be in another world, we shall find that his superiority is both in the substance of his poetry and in the style of his poetry. His superiority in substance is given by his large, free, simple, clear yet kindly view of human life, — so unlike the total want, in the romance-poets, of all intelligent command of it. Chaucer has not their helplessness; he has gained the power to survey the world from a central, a truly human point of view. We have only to call to mind the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. The right comment upon it is Dryden's: "It is

sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that *here is God's plenty.*" And again: "He is a perpetual fountain of good sense." It is by a large, free, sound representation of things, that poetry, this high criticism of life, has truth of substance; and Chaucer's poetry has truth of substance.

Of his style and manner, if we think first of the romance-poetry and then of Chaucer's divine liquidness of diction, his divine fluidity of movement, it is difficult to speak temperately. They are irresistible, and justify all the rapture with which his successors speak of his "gold dew-drops of speech." Johnson misses the point entirely when he finds fault with Dryden for ascribing to Chaucer the first refinement of our numbers, and says that Gower also can show smooth numbers and easy rhymes. The refinement of our numbers means something far more than this. A nation may have versifiers with smooth numbers and easy rhymes, and yet may have no real poetry at all. Chaucer is the father of our splendid English poetry; he is our "well of English undefiled," because by the lovely charm of his diction, the lovely charm of his movement, he makes an epoch and founds a tradition. In Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, we can follow the tradition of the liquid diction, the fluid movement, of Chaucer; at one time it is his liquid diction of which in these poets we feel the virtue, and at another time it is his fluid movement. And the virtue is irresistible.

Bounded as is my space, I must yet find room for an example of Chaucer's virtue, as I have given examples to show the virtue of the great classics. I feel disposed to say that a single line is enough to show the charm of Chaucer's verse; that merely one line like this—

"O martyr souted<sup>1</sup> in virginitee!"

has a virtue of manner and movement such as we shall not

<sup>1</sup> The French *soudé*; soldered, fixed fast.

find in all the verse of romance-poetry ; — but this is saying nothing. The virtue is such as we shall not find, perhaps, in all English poetry, outside the poets whom I have named as the special inheritors of Chaucer's tradition. A single line, however, is too little if we have not the strain of Chaucer's verse well in our memory ; let us take a stanza. It is from *The Prioress's Tale*, the story of the Christian child murdered in a Jewry —

“ My throte is cut unto my nekke-bone  
Saidè this child, and as by way of kinde  
I should have deyed, yea, longè time agone ;  
But Jesu Christ, as ye in bookès finde,  
Will that his glory last and be in minde,  
And for the worship of his mother dere  
Yet may I sing O *Alma* loud and clere.”

Wordsworth has modernised this Tale, and to feel how delicate and evanescent is the charm of verse, we have only to read Wordsworth's first three lines of this stanza after Chaucer's —

“ My throat is cut unto the bone, I trow,  
Said this young child, and by the law of kind  
I should have died, yea, many hours ago.”

The charm is departed. It is often said that the power of liquidness and fluidity in Chaucer's verse was dependent upon a free, a licentious dealing with language, such as is now impossible ; upon a liberty, such as Burns too enjoyed, of making words like *neck*, *bird*, into a dissyllable by adding to them, and words like *cause*, *rhyme*, into a dissyllable by sounding the *e* mute. It is true that Chaucer's fluidity is conjoined with this liberty, and is admirably served by it ; but we ought not to say that it was dependent upon it. It was dependent upon his talent. Other poets with a like liberty do not attain to the fluidity of Chaucer ; Burns himself does not attain to it. Poets, again, who have a talent akin to Chaucer's, such as Shakespeare or Keats, have

known how to attain to his fluidity without the like liberty.

And yet Chaucer is not one of the great classics. His poetry transcends and effaces, easily and without effort, all the romance-poetry of Catholic Christendom; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry contemporary with it, it transcends and effaces all the English poetry subsequent to it down to the age of Elizabeth. Of such avail is poetic truth of substance, in its natural and necessary union with poetic truth of style. And yet, I say, Chaucer is not one of the great classics. He has not their accent. What is wanting to him is suggested by the mere mention of the name of the first great classic of Christendom, the immortal poet who died eighty years before Chaucer, — Dante. The accent of such verse as

“In la sua volontade è nostra pace . . .”

is altogether beyond Chaucer's reach; we praise him, but we feel that this accent is out of the question for him. It may be said that it was necessarily out of the reach of any poet in the England of that stage of growth. Possibly; but we are to adopt a real, not a historic, estimate of poetry. However we may account for its absence, something is wanting, then, to the poetry of Chaucer, which poetry must have before it can be placed in the glorious class of the best. And there is no doubt what that something is. It is the *σπουδαίότης*, the high and excellent seriousness, which Aristotle assigns as one of the grand virtues of poetry. The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness. Homer's criticism of life has it, Dante's has it, Shakespeare's has it. It is this chiefly which gives to our spirits what they can rest upon; and with the increasing demands of our modern ages upon poetry, this virtue of giving us what we can rest upon will be more and more highly esteemed. A voice from the

slums of Paris, fifty or sixty years after Chaucer, the voice of poor Villon out of his life of riot and crime, has at its happy moments (as, for instance, in the last stanza of *La Belle Heaulmière*<sup>1</sup>) more of this important poetic virtue of seriousness than all the productions of Chaucer. But its apparition in Villon, and in men like Villon, is fitful; the greatness of the great poets, the power of their criticism of life, is that their virtue is sustained.

To our praise therefore, of Chaucer as a poet there must be this limitation; he lacks the high seriousness of the great classics, and therewith an important part of their virtue. Still, the main fact for us to bear in mind about Chaucer is his sterling value according to that real estimate which we firmly adopt for all poets. He has poetic truth of substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.

For my present purpose I need not dwell on our Elizabethan poetry, or on the continuation and close of this poetry in Milton. We all of us profess to be agreed in the estimate of this poetry; we all of us recognise it as great poetry, our greatest, and Shakespeare and Milton as our

<sup>1</sup> The name *Heaulmière* is said to be derived from a headdress (helm) worn as a mark by courtesans. In Villon's ballad, a poor old creature of this class laments her days of youth and beauty. The last stanza of the ballad runs thus—

“ Ainsi le bon temps regrettons  
Entre nous, pauvres vieilles sottes,  
Assises bas, à croppetons,  
Tout en ung tas comme pelottes;  
A petit feu de chenevottes  
Tost allumées, tost estainctes.  
Et jadis fusmes si mignottes!  
Ainsi en prend à maintz et maintes.”

“ Thus amongst ourselves we regret the good time, poor silly old things, low-seated on our heels, all in a heap like so many balls; by a little fire of hemp-stalks, soon lighted, soon spent. And once we were such darlings! So fares it with many and many a one.”

poetical classics. The real estimate, here, has universal currency. With the next age of our poetry divergency and difficulty begin. An historic estimate of that poetry has established itself; and the question is, whether it will be found to coincide with the real estimate.

The age of Dryden, together with our whole eighteenth century which followed it, sincerely believed itself to have produced poetical classics of its own, and even to have made advance, in poetry, beyond all its predecessors. Dryden regards as not seriously disputable the opinion "that the sweetness of English verse was never understood or practised by our fathers." Cowley could see nothing at all in Chaucer's poetry. Dryden heartily admired it, and, as we have seen, praised its matter admirably; but of its exquisite manner and movement all he can find to say is that "there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect." Addison, wishing to praise Chaucer's numbers, compares them with Dryden's own. And all through the eighteenth century, and down even into our own times, the stereotyped phrase of approbation for good verse found in our early poetry has been, that it even approached the verse of Dryden, Addison, Pope, and Johnson.

Are Dryden and Pope poetical classics? Is the historic estimate, which represents them as such, and which has been so long established that it cannot easily give way, the real estimate? Wordsworth and Coleridge, as is well known, denied it; but the authority of Wordsworth and Coleridge does not weigh much with the young generation, and there are many signs to show that the eighteenth century and its judgments are coming into favour again. Are the favourite poets of the eighteenth century classics?

It is impossible within my present limits to discuss the question fully. And what man of letters would not shrink from seeming to dispose dictatorially of the claims of two



men who are, at any rate, such masters in letters as Dryden and Pope; two men of such admirable talent, both of them, and one of them, Dryden, a man, on all sides, of such energetic and genial power? And yet, if we are to gain the full benefit from poetry, we must have the real estimate of it. I cast about for some mode of arriving, in the present case, at such an estimate without offence. And perhaps the best way is to begin, as it is easy to begin, with cordial praise.

When we find Chapman, the Elizabethan translator of Homer, expressing himself in his preface thus: "Though truth in her very nakedness sits in so deep a pit, that from Gades to Aurora and Ganges few eyes can sound her, I hope yet those few here will so discover and confirm that, the date being out of her darkness in this morning of our poet, he shall now gird his temples with the sun," — we pronounce that such a prose is intolerable. When we find Milton writing: "And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he, who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem," — we pronounce that such a prose has its own grandeur, but that it is obsolete and inconvenient. But when we find Dryden telling us: "What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age, in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write," — then we exclaim that here at last we have the true English prose, a prose such as we would all gladly use if we only knew how. Yet Dryden was Milton's contemporary.

But after the Restoration the time had come when our nation felt the imperious need of a fit prose. So, too, the time had likewise come when our nation felt the imperious need of freeing itself from the absorbing preoccupation which religion in the Puritan age had exercised. It was impossible that this freedom should be brought about without

some negative excess, without some neglect and impairment of the religious life of the soul; and the spiritual history of the eighteenth century shows us that the freedom was not achieved without them. Still, the freedom was achieved; the preoccupation, an undoubtedly baneful and retarding one if it had continued, was got rid of. And as with religion amongst us at that period, so it was also with letters. A fit prose was a necessity; but it was impossible that a fit prose should establish itself amongst us without some touch of frost to the imaginative life of the soul. The needful qualities for a fit prose are regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. The men of letters, whose destiny it may be to bring their nation to the attainment of a fit prose, must of necessity, whether they work in prose or in verse, give a predominating, an almost exclusive attention to the qualities of regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. But an almost exclusive attention to these qualities involves some repression and silencing of poetry.

We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century. For the purposes of their mission and destiny their poetry, like their prose, is admirable. Do you ask me whether Dryden's verse, take it almost where you will, is not good?

"A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchanged,  
Fed on the lawns and in the forest ranged."

I answer: Admirable for the purposes of the inaugurator of an age of prose and reason. Do you ask me whether Pope's verse, take it almost where you will, is not good?

"To Hounslow Heath I point, and Banstead Down;  
Thence comes your mutton, and these chicks my own."

I answer: Admirable for the purposes of the high priest of an age of prose and reason. But do you ask me whether

such verse proceeds from men with an adequate poetic criticism of life, from men whose criticism of life has a high seriousness, or even, without that high seriousness, has poetic largeness, freedom, insight, benignity? Do you ask me whether the application of ideas to life in the verse of these men, often a powerful application, no doubt, is a powerful *poetic* application? Do you ask me whether the poetry of these men has either the matter or the inseparable manner of such an adequate poetic criticism; whether it has the accent of

“Absent thee from felicity awhile . . .”

or of

“And what is else not to be overcome . . .”

or of

“O martyr soulded in virginitee!”

I answer: It has not and cannot have them; it is the poetry of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose.

Gray is our poetical classic of that literature and age; the position of Gray is singular, and demands a word of notice here. He has not the volume or the power of poets who, coming in times more favourable, have attained to an independent criticism of life. But he lived with the great poets, he lived, above all, with the Greeks, through perpetually studying and enjoying them; and he caught their poetic point of view for regarding life, caught their poetic manner. The point of view and the manner are not self-sprung in him, he caught them of others; and he had not the free and abundant use of them. But whereas Addison and Pope never had the use of them, Gray had the use of them at times. He is the scantiest and frailest of classics in our poetry, but he is a classic.

And now, after Gray, we are met, as we draw towards the end of the eighteenth century, we are met by the great name of Burns. We enter now on times where the personal estimate of poets begins to be rife, and where the real estimate of them is not reached without difficulty. But in spite of the disturbing pressure of personal partiality, of national partiality, let us try to reach a real estimate of the poetry of Burns.

By his English poetry Burns in general belongs to the eighteenth century, and has little importance for us.

“Mark ruffian Violence, distain’d with crimes,  
Rousing elate in these degenerate times;  
View unsuspecting Innocence a prey,  
As guileful Fraud points out the erring way;  
While subtile Litigation’s pliant tongue  
The life-blood equal sucks of Right and Wrong!”

Evidently this is not the real Burns, or his name and fame would have disappeared long ago. Nor is Clarinda’s love-poet, Sylvander, the real Burns either. But he tells us himself: “These English songs gravel me to death. I have not the command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact, I think that my ideas are more barren in English than in Scotch. I have been at *Duncan Gray* to dress it in English, but all I can do is desperately stupid.” We English turn naturally, in Burns, to the poems in our own language, because we can read them easily; but in those poems we have not the real Burns.

The real Burns is of course in his Scotch poems. Let us boldly say that of much of this poetry, a poetry dealing perpetually with Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, a Scotchman’s estimate is apt to be personal. A Scotchman is used to this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners; he has a tenderness for it; he meets its poet half way. In this tender mood he reads pieces like the *Holy Fair* or *Halloween*. But this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners is against

a poet, not for him, when it is not a partial countryman who reads him; for in itself it is not a beautiful world, and no one can deny that it is of advantage to a poet to deal with a beautiful world. Burns's world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, is often a harsh, a sordid, a repulsive world; even the world of his *Cotter's Saturday Night* is not a beautiful world. No doubt a poet's criticism of life may have such truth and power that it triumphs over its world and delights us. Burns may triumph over his world, often he does triumph over his world, but let us observe how and where. Burns is the first case we have had where the bias of the personal estimate tends to mislead; let us look at him closely, he can bear it.

Many of his admirers will tell us that we have Burns, convivial, genuine, delightful, here —

“Leeze me on drink ! it gies us mair  
 Than either school or college ;  
 It kindles wit, it waukens lair,  
 It pangs us fou o' knowledge.  
 Be 't whisky gill or penny wheep  
 Or ony stronger potion,  
 It never fails, on drinking deep,  
 To kittle up our notion  
 By night or day.”

There is a great deal of that sort of thing in Burns, and it is unsatisfactory, not because it is bacchanalian poetry, but because it has not that accent of sincerity which bacchanalian poetry, to do it justice, very often has. There is something in it of bravado, something which makes us feel that we have not the man speaking to us with his real voice; something, therefore, poetically unsound.

With still more confidence will his admirers tell us that we have the genuine Burns, the great poet, when his strain asserts the independence, equality, dignity, of men, as in the famous song *For a' that and a' that* —

"A prince can mak' a belted knight,  
 A marquis, duke, and a' that ;  
 But an honest man's aboon his might,  
 Guid faith he mauna fa' that !  
 For a' that, and a' that,  
 Their dignities, and a' that,  
 The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,  
 Are higher rank than a' that."

Here they find his grand, genuine touches; and still more, when this puissant genius, who so often set morality at defiance, falls moralising —

"The sacred lowe o' weel-placed love  
 Luxuriantly indulge it ;  
 But never tempt th' illicit rove,  
 Tho' naething should divulge it.  
 I waive the quantum o' the sin,  
 The hazard o' concealing,  
 But och ! it hardens a' within,  
 And petrifies the feeling."

or in a higher strain —

"Who made the heart, 'tis He alone  
 Decidedly can try us ;  
 He knows each chord, its various tone ;  
 Each spring, its various bias.  
 Then at the balance let's be mute,  
 We never can adjust it ;  
 What's *done* we partly may compute,  
 But know not what's resisted."

Or in a better strain yet, a strain, his admirers will say, unsurpassable —

"To make a happy fire-side clime  
 To weans and wife,  
 That's the true pathos and sublime  
 Of human life."

There is criticism of life for you, the admirers of Burns will say to us; there is the application of ideas to life! There

is, undoubtedly. The doctrine of the last quoted lines coincides almost exactly with what was the aim and end, Xenophon tells us, of all the teaching of Socrates. And the application is a powerful one; made by a man of vigorous understanding, and (need I say?) a master of language.

But for supreme poetical success more is required than the powerful application of ideas to life; it must be an application under the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Those laws fix as an essential condition, in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness;—the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity. The accent of high seriousness, born of absolute sincerity, is what gives to such verse as

“In la sua volontade è nostra pace . . .”

to such criticism of life as Dante's, its power. Is this accent felt in the passages which I have been quoting from Burns? Surely not; surely, if our sense is quick, we must perceive that we have not in those passages a voice from the very inmost soul of the genuine Burns; he is not speaking to us from these depths, he is more or less preaching. And the compensation for admiring such passages less, from missing the perfect poetic accent in them, will be that we shall admire more the poetry where that accent is found.

No; Burns, like Chaucer, comes short of the high seriousness of the great classics, and the virtue of matter and manner which goes with that high seriousness is wanting to his work. At moments he touches it in a profound and passionate melancholy, as in those four immortal lines taken by Byron as a motto for *The Bride of Abydos*, but which have in them a depth of poetic quality such as resides in no verse of Byron's own—

‘Had we never loved sae kindly,  
Had we never loved sae blindly,  
Never met, or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.”



But a whole poem of that quality Burns cannot make; the rest, in the *Farewell to Nancy*, is verbiage.

We arrive best at the real estimate of Burns, I think, by conceiving his work as having truth of matter and truth of manner, but not the accent or the poetic virtue of the highest masters. His genuine criticism of life, when the sheer poet in him speaks, is ironic; it is not —

“Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme  
These woes of mine fulfil,  
Here firm I rest, they must be best  
Because they are Thy will!”

It is far rather: *Whistle ower the lare o't!* Yet we may say of him as of Chaucer, that of life and the world, as they come before him, his view is large, free, shrewd, benignant. —truly poetic, therefore; and his manner of rendering what he sees is to match. But we must note, at the same time, his great difference from Chaucer. The freedom of Chaucer is heightened, in Burns, by a fiery, reckless energy; the benignity of Chaucer deepens, in Burns, into an overwhelming sense of the pathos of things; — of the pathos of human nature, the pathos, also, of non-human nature. Instead of the fluidity of Chaucer's manner, the manner of Burns has spring, bounding swiftness. Burns is by far the greater force, though he has perhaps less charm. The world of Chaucer is fairer, richer, more significant than that of Burns; but when the largeness and freedom of Burns get full sweep, as in *Tam o' Shanter*, or still more in that puissant and splendid production, *The Jolly Beggars*, his world may be what it will, his poetic genius triumphs over it. In the world of *The Jolly Beggars* there is more than hideousness and squalor, there is bestiality; yet the piece is a superb poetic success. It has a breadth, truth, and power which make the famous scene in Auerbach's Cellar, of Goethe's *Faust*, seem artificial and tame beside it, and which are only matched by Shakespeare and Aristophanes.

Here, where his largeness and freedom serve him so admirably, and also in those poems and songs where to shrewdness he adds infinite archness and wit, and to benignity infinite pathos, where his manner is flawless, and a perfect poetic whole is the result,—in things like the address to the mouse whose home he had ruined, in things like *Duncan Gray*, *Tam Glen*, *Whistle and I'll come to you my Lad*, *Auld Lang Syne* (this list might be made much longer),—here we have the genuine Burns, of whom the real estimate must be high indeed. Not a classic, nor with the excellent *σπουδαιότης* of the great classics, nor with a verse rising to a criticism of life and a virtue like theirs; but a poet with thorough truth of substance and an answering truth of style, giving us a poetry sound to the core. We all of us have a leaning towards the pathetic, and may be inclined perhaps to prize Burns most for his touches of piercing, sometimes almost intolerable, pathos; for verse like—

“We twa hae paidl't i' the burn  
From mornin' sun till dine;  
But seas between us braid hae roar'd  
Sin auld lang syne . . .”

where he is as lovely as he is sound. But perhaps it is by the perfection of soundness of his lighter and archer masterpieces that he is poetically most wholesome for us. For the votary misled by a personal estimate of Shelley, as so many of us have been, are, and will be,—of that beautiful spirit building his many-coloured haze of words and images

“Pinnacled dim in the intense inane” —

no contact can be wholesomer than the contact with Burns at his archest and soundest. Side by side with the

“On the brink of the night and the morning  
My coursers are wont to respire,  
But the Earth has just whispered a warning  
That their flight must be swifter than fire . . .”

of *Prometheus Unbound*, how salutary, how very salutary to place this from *Tam Glen* —

“ My minnie does constantly deave me  
And bids me beware o’ young men ;  
They flatter, she says, to deceive me ;  
But wha can think sae o’ Tam Glen ? ”

But we enter on burning ground as we approach the poetry of times so near to us — poetry like that of Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth — of which the estimates are so often not only personal, but personal with passion. For my purpose, it is enough to have taken the single case of Burns, the first poet we come to of whose work the estimate formed is evidently apt to be personal, and to have suggested how we may proceed, using the poetry of the great classics as a sort of touchstone, to correct this estimate, as we had previously corrected by the same means the historic estimate where we met with it. A collection like the present, with its succession of celebrated names and celebrated poems, offers a good opportunity to us for resolutely endeavouring to make our estimates of poetry real. I have sought to point out a method which will help us in making them so, and to exhibit it in use so far as to put any one who likes in a way of applying it for himself.

At any rate the end to which the method and the estimate are designed to lead, and from leading to which, if they do lead to it, they get their whole value, — the benefit of being able clearly to feel and deeply to enjoy the best, the truly classic, in poetry, — is an end, let me say it once more at parting, of supreme importance. We are often told that an era is opening in which we are to see multitudes of a common sort of readers, and masses of a common sort of literature ; that such readers do not want and could not relish anything better than such literature, and that to provide it is becoming a vast and profitable industry. Even if

good literature entirely lost currency with the world, it would still be abundantly worth while to continue to enjoy it by oneself. But it never will lose currency with the world, in spite of momentary appearances; it never will lose supremacy. Currency and supremacy are insured to it, not indeed by the world's deliberate and conscious choice, but by something far deeper,—by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

## JOHN KEATS.<sup>1</sup>

POETRY, according to Milton's famous saying, should be "simple, sensuous, impassioned." No one can question the eminency, in Keats's poetry, of the quality of sensuousness. Keats as a poet is abundantly and enchantingly sensuous; the question with some people will be, whether he is anything else. Many things may be brought forward which seem to show him as under the fascination and sole dominion of sense, and desiring nothing better. There is the exclamation in one of his letters: "O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!" There is the thesis, in another, "that with a great Poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration." There is Haydon's story of him, how "he once covered his tongue and throat as far as he could reach with Cayenne pepper, in order to appreciate the delicious coldness of claret in all its glory—his own expression." One is not much surprised when Haydon further tells us, of the hero of such a story, that once for six weeks together he was hardly ever sober. "He had no decision of character," Haydon adds; "no object upon which to direct his great powers."

Character and self-control, the *virtus verusque labor* so necessary for every kind of greatness, and for the great artist, too, indispensable, appear to be wanting, certainly, to this Keats of Haydon's portraiture. They are wanting also to the Keats of the *Letters to Fanny Brawne*. These letters make as unpleasing an impression as Haydon's anecdotes.

<sup>1</sup> Prefixed to the Selection from Keats in Ward's *English Poets*, vol. iv., 1880.



JOHN KEATS





'The editor of Haydon's journals could not well omit what Haydon said of his friend, but for the publication of the *Letters to Fanny Brawne* I can see no good reason whatever. Their publication appears to me, I confess, inexcusable; they ought never to have been published. But published they are, and we have to take notice of them. Letters written when Keats was near his end, under the throttling and unmanning grasp of mortal disease, we will not judge. But here is a letter written some months before he was taken ill. It is printed just as Keats wrote it.

"You have absorb'd me. I have a sensation at the present moment as though I was dissolving—I should be exquisitely miserable without the hope of soon seeing you. I should be afraid to separate myself far from you. My sweet Fanny, will your heart never change? My love, will it? I have no limit now to my love. . . . Your note came in just here. I cannot be happier away from you. 'Tis richer than an Argosy of Pearles. Do not threat me even in jest. I have been astonished that Men could die Martyrs for religion—I have shuddered at it. I shudder no more—I could be martyred for my Religion—Love is my religion—I could die for that. I could die for you. My Creed is Love and you are its only tenet. You have ravished me away by a Power I cannot resist; and yet I could resist till I saw you; and even since I have seen you I have endeavored often 'to reason against the reasons of my Love.' I can do that no more—the pain would be too great. My love is selfish. I cannot breathe without you."

A man who writes love-letters in this strain is probably predestined, one may observe, to misfortune in his love-affairs; but that is nothing. The complete enervation of the writer is the real point for remark. We have the tone, or rather the entire want of tone, the abandonment of all reticence and all dignity, of the merely sensuous man, of the man who "is passion's slave." Nay, we have them in such wise that one is tempted to speak even as *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* were in the old days wont to speak; one is tempted to say that Keats's love-letter is the love-letter of a surgeon's apprentice. It has in its relaxed self-abandon

ment something underbred and ignoble, as of a youth ill brought up, without the training which teaches us that we must put some constraint upon our feelings and upon the expression of them. It is the sort of love-letter of a surgeon's apprentice which one might hear read out in a breach of promise case, or in the Divorce Court. The sensuous man speaks in it, and the sensuous man of a badly bred and badly trained sort. That many who are themselves also badly bred and badly trained should enjoy it, and should even think it a beautiful and characteristic production of him whom they call their "lovely and beloved Keats," does not make it better. These are the admirers whose pawing and fondness does not good but harm to the fame of Keats; who concentrate attention upon what in him is least wholesome and most questionable; who worship him, and would have the world worship him too, as the poet of

"Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair,  
Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy breast."

This sensuous strain Keats had, and a man of his poetic powers could not, whatever his strain, but show his talent in it. But he has something more, and something better. We who believe Keats to have been by his promise, at any rate, if not fully by his performance, one of the very greatest of English poets, and who believe also that a merely sensuous man cannot either by promise or by performance be a very great poet, because poetry interprets life, and so large and noble a part of life is outside of such a man's ken,—we cannot but look for signs in him of something more than sensuousness, for signs of character and virtue. And indeed the elements of high character Keats undoubtedly has, and the effort to develop them; the effort is frustrated and cut short by misfortune, and disease, and time, but for the due understanding of Keats's worth the recognition of this effort, and of the elements on which it worked, is necessary.

Lord Houghton, who praises very discriminatingly the poetry of Keats, has on his character also a remark full of discrimination. He says: "The faults of Keats's disposition were precisely the contrary of those attributed to him by common opinion." And he gives a letter written after the death of Keats by his brother George, in which the writer, speaking of the fantastic *Johnny Keats* invented for common opinion by Lord Byron and by the reviewers, declares indignantly: "John was the very soul of manliness and courage, and as much like the Holy Ghost as *Johnny Keats*." It is important to note this testimony, and to look well for whatever illustrates and confirms it.

Great weight is laid by Lord Houghton on such a direct profession of faith as the following: "That sort of probity and disinterestedness," Keats writes to his brothers, "which such men as Bailey possess, does hold and grasp the tip-top of any spiritual honours that can be paid to anything in this world." Lord Houghton says that "never have words more effectively expressed the conviction of the superiority of virtue above beauty than those." But merely to make a profession of faith of the kind here made by Keats is not difficult; what we should rather look for is some evidence of the instinct for character, for virtue, passing into the man's life, passing into his work.

Signs of virtue, in the true and large sense of the word, the instinct for virtue passing into the life of Keats and strengthening it, I find in the admirable wisdom and temper of what he says to his friend Bailey on the occasion of a quarrel between Reynolds and Haydon:—

"Things have happened lately of great perplexity; you must have heard of them; Reynolds and Haydon retorting and recriminating, and parting for ever. The same thing has happened between Haydon and Hunt. It is unfortunate; men should bear with each other; there lives not the man who may not be cut up, aye, lashed to pieces, on his weakest side. The best of men have but a portion of good in them.

. . . The sure way, Bailey, is first to know a man's faults, and then be passive. If, after that, he insensibly draws you towards him, then you have no power to break the link. Before I felt interested in either Reynolds or Haydon, I was well read in their faults; yet, knowing them, I have been cementing gradually with both. I have an affection for them both, for reasons almost opposite; and to both must I of necessity cling, supported always by the hope that when a little time, a few years, shall have tried me more fully in their esteem, I may be able to bring them together."

Butler has well said that "endeavouring to enforce upon our own minds a practical sense of virtue, or to beget in others that practical sense of it which a man really has himself, is a virtuous *act*." And such an "endeavouring" is that of Keats in those words written to Bailey. It is more than mere words; so justly thought and so discreetly urged as it is, it rises to the height of a virtuous *act*. It is proof of character.

The same thing may be said of some words written to his friend Charles Brown, whose kindness, willingly exerted whenever Keats chose to avail himself of it, seemed to free him from any pressing necessity of earning his own living. Keats felt that he must not allow this state of things to continue. He determined to set himself to "fag on as others do" at periodical literature, rather than to endanger his independence and his self-respect; and he writes to Brown:—

"I had got into a habit of mind of looking towards you as a help in all difficulties. This very habit would be the parent of idleness and difficulties. You will see that it is a duty I owe to myself to break the neck of it. I do nothing for my subsistence—make no exertion. At the end of another year you shall applaud me, not for verses, but for conduct."

He had not, alas, another year of health before him when he announced that wholesome resolve; it then wanted but six months of the day of his fatal attack. But in the brief time allowed to him he did what he could to keep his word.

What character, again, what strength and clearness of judgment, in his criticism of his own productions, of the public, and of "the literary circles"! His words after the severe reviews of *Endymion* have often been quoted; they cannot be quoted too often:—

"Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works. My own criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict; and also, when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary re-perception and ratification of what is fine. J. S. is perfectly right in regard to the 'slipshod Endymion.' That it is so is no fault of mine. No! though it may sound a little paradoxical, it is as good as I had power to make it by myself."

And again, as if he had foreseen certain of his admirers gushing over him, and was resolved to disengage his responsibility:—

"I have done nothing, except for the amusement of a few people who refine upon their feelings till anything in the un-understandable way will go down with them. I have no cause to complain, because I am certain anything really fine will in these days be felt. I have no doubt that if I had written *Othello* I should have been cheered. I shall go on with patience."

Young poets almost inevitably over-rate what they call "the might of poesy," and its power over the world which now is. Keats is not a dupe on this matter any more than he is a dupe about the merit of his own performances:—

"I have no trust whatever in poetry. I don't wonder at it; the marvel is to me how people read so much of it."

His attitude towards the public is that of a strong man, not of a weakling avid of praise, and made to "be snuff'd out by an article":—

"I shall ever consider the public as debtors to me for verses, not myself to them for admiration, which I can do without."

And again, in a passage where one may perhaps find fault with the capital letters, but surely with nothing else : —

“ I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the public or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the memory of great Men. . . . I would be subdued before my friends, and thank them for subduing me; but among multitudes of men I have no feel of stooping; I hate the idea of humility to them. I never wrote one single line of poetry with the least shadow of thought about their opinion. Forgive me for vexing you, but it eases me to tell you : I could not live without the love of my friends, I would jump down Etna for any great public good — but I hate a mawkish popularity. I cannot be subdued before them. My glory would be to daunt and dazzle the thousand jabberers about pictures and books ”

Against these artistic and literary “ jabberers,” amongst whom Byron fancied Keats, probably, to be always living, flattering them and flattered by them, he has yet another outburst : —

“ Just so much as I am humbled by the genius above my grasp, am I exalted and look with hate and contempt upon the literary world. Who could wish to be among the commonplace crowd of the little famous, who are each individually lost in a throng made up of themselves ? ”

And he loves Fanny Brawne the more, he tells her, because he believes that she has liked him for his own sake and for nothing else. “ I have met with women who I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a Novel.”

There is a tone of too much bitterness and defiance in all this, a tone which he with great propriety subdued and corrected when he wrote his beautiful preface to *Endymion*. But the thing to be seized is, that Keats had flint and iron in him, that he had character; that he was, as his brother George says, “ as much like the Holy Ghost as *Johnny Keats*,” — as that imagined sensuous weakling, the delight of the literary circles of Hampstead.



It is a pity that Byron, who so misconceived Keats, should never have known how shrewdly Keats, on the other hand, had characterised *him*, as “a fine thing” in the sphere of “the worldly, theatrical, and pantomimical.” But indeed nothing is more remarkable in Keats than his clear-sightedness, his lucidity; and lucidity is in itself akin to character and to high and severe work. In spite, therefore, of his overpowering feeling for beauty, in spite of his sensuousness, in spite of his facility, in spite of his gift of expression, Keats could say resolutely:—

“I know nothing, I have read nothing; and I mean to follow Solomon’s directions: ‘Get learning, get understanding.’ There is but one way for me. The road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it.”

And of Milton, instead of resting in Milton’s incomparable phrases, Keats could say, although indeed all the while “looking upon fine phrases,” as he himself tells us, “like a lover” —

“Milton had an exquisite passion for what is properly, in the sense of ease and pleasure, poetical luxury; and with that, it appears to me, he would fain have been content, if he could, so doing, preserve his self-respect and feeling of duty performed; but there was working in him, as it were, that same sort of thing which operates in the great world to the end of a prophecy’s being accomplished. Therefore he devoted himself rather to the ardours than the pleasures of song, solacing himself at intervals with cups of old wine.”

In his own poetry, too, Keats felt that place must be found for “the ardours rather than the pleasures of song,” although he was aware that he was not yet ripe for it —

“But my flag is not unfurl’d  
On the Admiral-staff, and to philosophise  
I dare not yet.”

Even in his pursuit of “the pleasures of song,” however, there is that stamp of high work which is akin to character,



which is character passing into intellectual production. "*The best sort of poetry* — that," he truly says, "is all I care for, all I live for." It is curious to observe how this severe addiction of his to the best sort of poetry affects him with a certain coldness, as if the addiction had been to mathematics, towards those prime objects of a sensuous and passionate poet's regard, love and women. He speaks of "the opinion I have formed of the generality of women, who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar-plum than my time." He confesses "a tendency to class women in my books with roses and sweetmeats — they never see themselves dominant"; and he can understand how the unpopularity of his poems may be in part due to "the offence which the ladies," not unnaturally "take at him" from this cause. Even to Fanny Brawne he can write "a flint-worded letter," when his "mind is heaped to the full" with poetry:—

"I know the generality of women would hate me for this; that I should have so unsoftened, so hard a mind as to forget them; forget the brightest realities for the dull imaginations of my own brain. . . . My heart seems now made of iron — I could not write a proper answer to an invitation to Idalia."

The truth is that "the yearning passion for the Beautiful," which was with Keats, as he himself truly says, the master-passion, is not a passion of the sensuous or sentimental man, is not a passion of the sensuous or sentimental poet. It is an intellectual and spiritual passion. It is "connected and made one," as Keats declares that in his case it was, "with the ambition of the intellect." It is, as he again says, "the mighty *abstract idea* of Beauty in all things." And in his last days Keats wrote: "If I should die, I have left no immortal work behind me — nothing to make my friends proud of my memory; *but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things*, and if I had had time I would have made myself remembered." He *has* made

himself remembered, and remembered as no merely sensuous poet could be; and he has done it by having "loved the principle of beauty in all things."

For to see things in their beauty is to see things in their truth, and Keats knew it. "What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be 'Truth,'" he says in prose; and in immortal verse he has said the same thing —

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

No, it is not all; but it is true, deeply true, and we have deep need to know it. And with beauty goes not only truth, joy goes with her also; and this too Keats saw and said, as in the famous first line of his *Endymion* it stands written —

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

It is no small thing to have so loved the principle of beauty as to perceive the necessary relation of beauty with truth, and of both with joy. Keats was a great spirit, and counts for far more than many even of his admirers suppose, because this just and high perception made itself clear to him. Therefore a dignity and a glory shed gleams over his life, and happiness, too, was not a stranger to it. "Nothing startles me beyond the moment," he says; "the setting sun will always set me to rights, or if a sparrow come before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel." But he had terrible bafflers, — consuming disease and early death. "I think," he writes to Reynolds, "if I had a free and healthy and lasting organisation of heart, and lungs as strong as an ox's, so as to be able to bear unhurt the shock of extreme thought and sensation without weariness, I could pass my life very nearly alone, though it should last eighty years. But I feel my body too weak to support me to the height; I am obliged continually to check myself, and be nothing." He had against him even

more than this; he had against him the blind power which we call Fortune. "O that something fortunate," he cries in the closing months of his life, "had ever happened to me or my brothers!—then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit." So baffled and so sorely tried, — while laden, at the same time, with a mighty formative thought requiring health, and many days, and favouring circumstances, for its adequate manifestation, — what wonder if the achievement of Keats be partial and incomplete?

Nevertheless, let and hindered as he was, and with a short term and imperfect experience, — "young," as he says of himself, "and writing at random, straining after particles of light in the midst of a great darkness, without knowing the bearing of any one assertion, of any one opinion," — notwithstanding all this, by virtue of his feeling for beauty and of his perception of the vital connection of beauty with truth, Keats accomplished so much in poetry, that in one of the two great modes by which poetry interprets, in the faculty of naturalistic interpretation, in what we call natural magic, he ranks with Shakespeare. "The tongue of Kean," he says in an admirable criticism of that great actor and of his enchanting elocution, "the tongue of Kean must seem to have robbed the Hybla bees and left them honeyless. There is an indescribable *gusto* in his voice; — in *Richard*, 'Be stirring with the lark to-morrow, gentle Norfolk!' comes from him as through the morning atmosphere towards which he yearns." This magic, this "indescribable *gusto* in the voice," Keats himself, too, exhibits in his poetic expression. No one else in English poetry, save Shakespeare, has in expression quite the fascinating felicity of Keats, his perfection of loveliness. "I think," he said humbly, "I shall be among the English poets after my death." He is; he is with Shakespeare.

For the second great half of poetic interpretation, for that faculty of moral interpretation which is in Shakespeare, and

is informed by him with the same power of beauty as his naturalistic interpretation, Keats was not ripe. For the architectonics of poetry, the faculty which presides at the evolution of works like the *Agamemnon* or *Lear*, he was not ripe. His *Endymion*, as he himself well saw, is a failure, and his *Hyperion*, fine things as it contains, is not a success. But in shorter things, where the matured power of moral interpretation, and the high architectonics which go with complete poetic development, are not required, he is perfect. The poems which follow prove it, — prove it far better by themselves than anything which can be said about them will prove it. Therefore I have chiefly spoken here of the man, and of the elements in him which explain the production of such work. Shakespearian work it is; not imitative, indeed, of Shakespeare, but Shakespearian, because its expression has that rounded perfection and felicity of loveliness of which Shakespeare is the great master. To show such work is to praise it. Let us now end by delighting ourselves with a fragment of it, too broken to find a place among the pieces which follow, but far too beautiful to be lost. It is a fragment of an ode for May-day. O might I, he cries to May, O might I

“ . . . thy smiles

Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,  
By bards who died content on pleasant sward,  
Leaving great verse unto a little clan !

O, give me their old vigour, and unheard  
Save of the quiet primrose, and the span

Of heaven, and few years,  
Rounded by thee, my song should die away,  
Content as theirs,

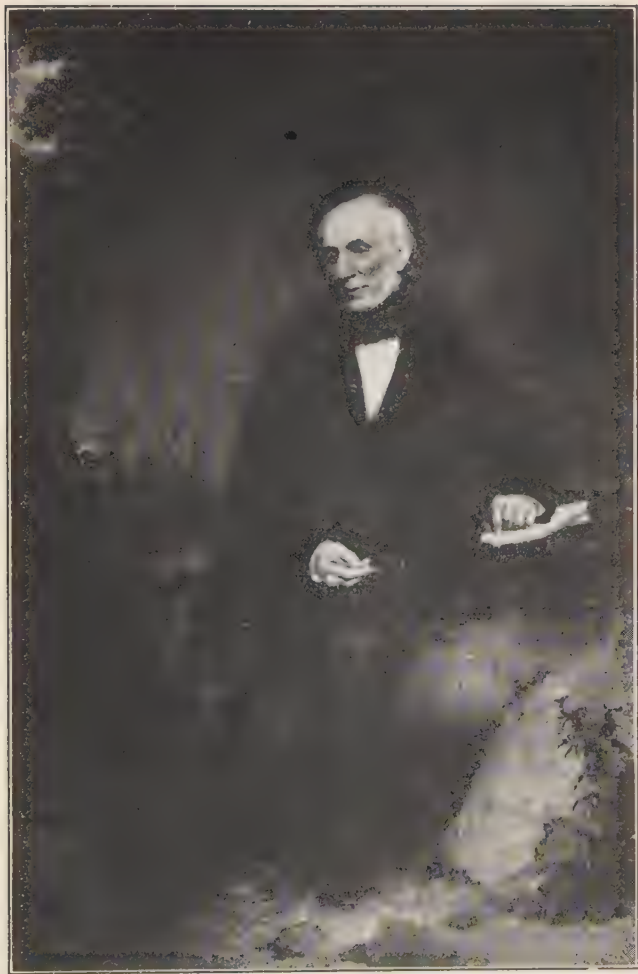
Rich in the simple worship of a day ! ”

## WORDSWORTH.<sup>1</sup>

I REMEMBER hearing Lord Macaulay say, after Wordsworth's death, when subscriptions were being collected to found a memorial of him, that ten years earlier more money could have been raised in Cambridge alone, to do honour to Wordsworth, than was now raised all through the country. Lord Macaulay had, as we know, his own heightened and telling way of putting things, and we must always make allowance for it. But probably it is true that Wordsworth has never, either before or since, been so accepted and popular, so established in possession of the minds of all who profess to care for poetry, as he was between the years 1830 and 1840, and at Cambridge. From the very first, no doubt, he had his believers and witnesses. But I have myself heard him declare that, for he knew not how many years, his poetry had never brought him in enough to buy his shoe-strings. The poetry-reading public was very slow to recognise him, and was very easily drawn away from him. Scott effaced him with this public, Byron effaced him.

The death of Byron seemed, however, to make an opening for Wordsworth. Scott, who had for some time ceased to produce poetry himself, and stood before the public as a great novelist; Scott, too genuine himself not to feel the profound genuineness of Wordsworth, and with an instinctive recognition of his firm hold on nature and of his local truth, always admired him sincerely, and praised him generously. The influence of Coleridge upon young men of

<sup>1</sup> The preface to *The Poems of Wordsworth*, chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold, 1879.



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH





ability was then powerful, and was still gathering strength; this influence told entirely in favour of Wordsworth's poetry. Cambridge was a place where Coleridge's influence had great action, and where Wordsworth's poetry, therefore, flourished especially. But even amongst the general public its sale grew large, the eminence of its author was widely recognised, and Rydal Mount became an object of pilgrimage. I remember Wordsworth relating how one of the pilgrims, a clergyman, asked him if he had ever written anything besides the *Guide to the Lakes*. Yes, he answered modestly, he had written verses. Not every pilgrim was a reader, but the vogue was established, and the stream of pilgrims came.

Mr. Tennyson's decisive appearance dates from 1842. One cannot say that he effaced Wordsworth as Scott and Byron had effaced him. The poetry of Wordsworth had been so long before the public, the suffrage of good judges was so steady and so strong in its favour, that by 1842 the verdict of posterity, one may almost say, had been already pronounced, and Wordsworth's English fame was secure. But the vogue, the ear and applause of the great body of poetry-readers, never quite thoroughly perhaps his, he gradually lost more and more, and Mr. Tennyson gained them. Mr. Tennyson drew to himself, and away from Wordsworth, the poetry-reading public, and the new generations. Even in 1850, when Wordsworth died, this diminution of popularity was visible, and occasioned the remark of Lord Macaulay which I quoted at starting.

The diminution has continued. The influence of Coleridge has waned, and Wordsworth's poetry can no longer draw succour from this ally. The poetry has not, however, wanted eulogists; and it may be said to have brought its eulogists luck, for almost every one who has praised Wordsworth's poetry has praised it well. But the public has remained cold, or, at least, undetermined. Even the abundance of Mr. Palgrave's fine and skilfully chosen specimens of

Wordsworth, in the *Golden Treasury*, surprised many readers, and gave offence to not a few. To tenth-rate critics and compilers, for whom any violent shock to the public taste would be a temerity not to be risked, it is still quite permissible to speak of Wordsworth's poetry, not only with ignorance, but with impertinence. On the Continent he is almost unknown.

I cannot think, then, that Wordsworth has, up to this time, at all obtained his deserts. "Glory," said M. Renan the other day, "glory after all is the thing which has the best chance of not being altogether vanity." Wordsworth was a homely man, and himself would certainly never have thought of talking of glory as that which, after all, has the best chance of not being altogether vanity. Yet we may well allow that few things are less vain than *real* glory. Let us conceive of the whole group of civilised nations as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working towards a common result; a confederation whose members have a due knowledge both of the past, out of which they all proceed, and of one another. This was the ideal of Goethe, and it is an ideal which will impose itself upon the thoughts of our modern societies more and more. Then to be recognised by the verdict of such a confederation as a master or even as a seriously and eminently worthy workman, in one's own line of intellectual or spiritual activity, is indeed glory; a glory which it would be difficult to rate too highly. For what could be more beneficent, more salutary? The world is forwarded by having its attention fixed on the best things; and here is a tribunal, free from all suspicion of national and provincial partiality, putting a stamp on the best things, and recommending them for general honour and acceptance. A nation, again, is furthered by recognition of its real gifts and successes; it is encouraged to develop them further. And here is an honest verdict, telling us which

of our supposed successes are really, in the judgment of the great impartial world, and not in our own private judgment only, successes, and which are not.

It is so easy to feel pride and satisfaction in one's own things, so hard to make sure that one is right in feeling it! We have a great empire. But so had Nebuchadnezzar. We extol the "unrivalled happiness" of our national civilisation. But then comes a candid friend, and remarks that our upper class is materialised, our middle class vulgarised, and our lower class brutalised. We are proud of our painting, our music. But we find that in the judgment of other people our painting is questionable, and our music non-existent. We are proud of our men of science. And here it turns out that the world is with us; we find that in the judgment of other people, too, Newton among the dead, and Mr. Darwin among the living, hold as high a place as they hold in our national opinion.

Finally, we are proud of our poets and poetry. Now poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth. It is no small thing, therefore, to succeed eminently in poetry. And so much is required for duly estimating success here, that about poetry it is perhaps hardest to arrive at a sure general verdict, and takes longest. Meanwhile, our own conviction of the superiority of our national poets is not decisive, is almost certain to be mingled, as we see constantly in English eulogy of Shakespeare, with much of provincial infatuation. And we know what was the opinion current amongst our neighbours the French—people of taste, acuteness, and quick literary tact—not a hundred years ago, about our great poets. The old *Biographie Universelle* notices the pretension of the English to a place for their poets among the chief poets of the world, and says that this is a pretension which to no one but an Englishman can ever seem admissible. And the scornful,

disparaging things said by foreigners about Shakespeare and Milton, and about our national over-estimate of them, have been often quoted, and will be in every one's remembrance.

A great change has taken place, and Shakespeare is now generally recognised, even in France, as one of the greatest of poets. Yes, some anti-Gallican cynic will say, the French rank him with Corneille and with Victor Hugo! But let me have the pleasure of quoting a sentence about Shakespeare, which I met with by accident not long ago in the *Correspondant*, a French review which not a dozen English people, I suppose, look at. The writer is praising Shakespeare's prose. With Shakespeare, he says, "prose comes in whenever the subject, being more familiar, is unsuited to the majestic English iambic." And he goes on: "Shakespeare is the king of poetic rhythm and style, as well as the king of the realm of thought; along with his dazzling prose, Shakespeare has succeeded in giving us the most varied, the most harmonious verse which has ever sounded upon the human ear since the verse of the Greeks." M. Henry Cochin, the writer of this sentence, deserves our gratitude for it; it would not be easy to praise Shakespeare, in a single sentence, more justly. And when a foreigner and a Frenchman writes thus of Shakespeare, and when Goethe says of Milton, in whom there was so much to repel Goethe rather than to attract him, that "nothing has been ever done so entirely in the sense of the Greeks as *Samson Agonistes*," and that "Milton is in very truth a poet whom we must treat with all reverence," then we understand what constitutes a European recognition of poets and poetry as contradistinguished from a merely national recognition, and that in favour both of Milton and of Shakespeare the judgment of the high court of appeal has finally gone.

I come back to M. Renan's praise of glory, from which I started. Yes, real glory is a most serious thing, glory

authenticated by the Amphictyonic Court of final appeal, definitive glory. And even for poets and poetry, long and difficult as may be the process of arriving at the right award, the right award comes at last, the definitive glory rests where it is deserved. Every establishment of such a real glory is good and wholesome for mankind at large, good and wholesome for the nation which produced the poet crowned with it. To the poet himself it can seldom do harm; for he, poor man, is in his grave, probably, long before his glory crowns him.

Wordsworth has been in his grave for some thirty years, and certainly his lovers and admirers cannot flatter themselves that this great and steady light of glory as yet shines over him. He is not fully recognised at home; he is not recognised at all abroad. Yet I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognises the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time. Chaucer is anterior; and on other grounds, too, he cannot well be brought into the comparison. But taking the roll of our chief poetical names, besides Shakespeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth downwards, and going through it, — Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats (I mention those only who are dead), — I think it certain that Wordsworth's name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all. Several of the poets named have gifts and excellences which Wordsworth has not. But taking the performance of each as a whole, I say that Wordsworth seems to me to have left a body of poetical work superior in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, to that which any one of the others has left.

But this is not enough to say. I think it certain, further,

that if we take the chief poetical names of the Continent since the death of Molière, and, omitting Goethe, confront the remaining names with that of Wordsworth, the result is the same. Let us take Klopstock, Lessing, Schiller, Uhland, Rückert, and Heine for Germany; Filicaja, Alfieri, Manzoni, and Leopardi for Italy; Racine, Boileau, Voltaire, André Chenier, Béranger, Lamartine, Musset, M. Victor Hugo (he has been so long celebrated that although he still lives I may be permitted to name him) for France. Several of these, again, have evidently gifts and excellences to which Wordsworth can make no pretension. But in real poetical achievement it seems to me indubitable that to Wordsworth, here again, belongs the palm. It seems to me that Wordsworth has left behind him a body of poetical work which wears, and will wear, better on the whole than the performance of any one of these personages, so far more brilliant and celebrated, most of them, than the homely poet of Rydal. Wordsworth's performance in poetry is on the whole, in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, superior to theirs.

This is a high claim to make for Wordsworth. But if it is a just claim, if Wordsworth's place among the poets who have appeared in the last two or three centuries is after Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, indeed, but before all the rest, then in time Wordsworth will have his due. We shall recognise him in his place, as we recognise Shakespeare and Milton; and not only we ourselves shall recognise him, but he will be recognised by Europe also. Meanwhile, those who recognise him already may do well, perhaps, to ask themselves whether there are not in the case of Wordsworth certain special obstacles which hinder or delay his due recognition by others, and whether these obstacles are not in some measure removable.

The *Excursion* and the *Prelude*, his poems of greatest bulk, are by no means Wordsworth's best work. His best



work is in his shorter pieces, and many indeed are there of these which are of first-rate excellence. But in his seven volumes the pieces of high merit are mingled with a mass of pieces very inferior to them; so inferior to them that it seems wonderful how the same poet should have produced both. Shakespeare frequently has lines and passages in a strain quite false, and which are entirely unworthy of him. But one can imagine his smiling if one could meet him in the Elysian Fields and tell him so; smiling and replying that he knew it perfectly well himself, and what did it matter? But with Wordsworth the case is different. Work altogether inferior, work quite uninspired, flat and dull, is produced by him with evident unconsciousness of its defects, and he presents it to us with the same faith and seriousness as his best work. Now a drama or an epic fill the mind, and one does not look beyond them; but in a collection of short pieces the impression made by one piece requires to be continued and sustained by the piece following. In reading Wordsworth the impression made by one of his fine pieces is too often dulled and spoiled by a very inferior piece coming after it.

Wordsworth composed verses during a space of some sixty years; and it is no exaggeration to say that within one single decade of those years, between 1798 and 1808, almost all his really first-rate work was produced. A mass of inferior work remains, work done before and after this golden prime, imbedding the first-rate work and clogging it, obstructing our approach to it, chilling, not unfrequently, the high-wrought mood with which we leave it. To be recognised far and wide as a great poet, to be possible and receivable as a classic, Wordsworth needs to be relieved of a great deal of the poetical baggage which now encumbers him. To administer this relief is indispensable, unless he is to continue to be a poet for the few only, — a poet valued far below his real worth by the world.



There is another thing. Wordsworth classified his poems not according to any commonly received plan of arrangement, but according to a scheme of mental physiology. He has poems of the fancy, poems of the imagination, poems of sentiment and reflection, and so on. His categories are ingenious but far-fetched, and the result of his employment of them is unsatisfactory. Poems are separated one from another which possess a kinship of subject or of treatment far more vital and deep than the supposed unity of mental origin, which was Wordsworth's reason for joining them with others.

The tact of the Greeks in matters of this kind was infallible. We may rely upon it that we shall not improve upon the classification adopted by the Greeks for kinds of poetry; that their categories of epic, dramatic, lyric, and so forth, have a natural propriety, and should be adhered to. It may sometimes seem doubtful to which of two categories a poem belongs; whether this or that poem is to be called, for instance, narrative or lyric, lyric or elegiac. But there is to be found in every good poem a strain, a predominant note, which determines the poem as belonging to one of these kinds rather than the other; and here is the best proof of the value of the classification, and of the advantage of adhering to it. Wordsworth's poems will never produce their due effect until they are freed from their present artificial arrangement, and grouped more naturally.

Disengaged from the quantity of inferior work which now obscures them, the best poems of Wordsworth, I hear many people say, would indeed stand out in great beauty, but they would prove to be very few in number, scarcely more than half a dozen. I maintain, on the other hand, that what strikes me with admiration, what establishes in my opinion Wordsworth's superiority, is the great and ample body of powerful work which remains to him, even after all his inferior work has been cleared away. He gives us so much

to rest upon, so much which communicates his spirit and engages ours!

This is of very great importance. If it were a comparison of single pieces, or of three or four pieces, by each poet, I do not say that Wordsworth would stand decisively above Gray, or Burns, or Coleridge, or Keats, or Manzoni, or Heine. It is in his ampler body of powerful work that I find his superiority. His good work itself, his work which counts, is not all of it, of course, of equal value. Some kinds of poetry are in themselves lower kinds than others. The ballad kind is a lower kind; the didactic kind, still more, is a lower kind. Poetry of this latter sort counts, too, sometimes, by its biographical interest partly, not by its poetical interest pure and simple; but then this can only be when the poet producing it has the power and importance of Wordsworth, a power and importance which he assuredly did not establish by such didactic poetry alone. Altogether, it is, I say, by the great body of powerful and significant work which remains to him, after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth's superiority is proved.

To exhibit this body of Wordsworth's best work, to clear away obstructions from around it, and to let it speak for itself, is what every lover of Wordsworth should desire. Until this has been done, Wordsworth, whom we, to whom he is dear, all of us know and feel to be so great a poet, has not had a fair chance before the world. When once it has been done, he will make his way best, not by our advocacy of him, but by his own worth and power. We may safely leave him to make his way thus, we who believe that a superior worth and power in poetry finds in mankind a sense responsive to it and disposed at last to recognise it. Yet at the outset, before he has been duly known and recognised, we may do Wordsworth a service, perhaps, by indicating in what his superior power and worth will be found to consist, and in what it will not.

Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

“On man, on nature, and on human life,”

which he has acquired for himself. The line quoted is Wordsworth's own; and his superiority arises from his powerful use, in his best pieces, his powerful application to his subject, of ideas “on man, on nature, and on human life.”

Voltaire, with his signal acuteness, most truly remarked that “no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation.” And he adds: “There, it seems to me, is the great merit of the English poets.” Voltaire does not mean, by “treating in poetry moral ideas,” the composing moral and didactic poems; — that brings us but a very little way in poetry. He means just the same thing as was meant when I spoke above “of the noble and profound application of ideas to life”; and he means the application of these ideas under the conditions fixed for us by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth. If it is said that to call these ideas *moral* ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation, I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, *how to live*, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term *moral*. Whatever bears upon the question, “how to live” comes under it.

“Nor love thy life, nor hate; but, what thou liv'st,  
Live well; how long or short, permit to heaven.”

In those fine lines Milton utters, as every one at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so too, when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line,

“For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair” —

he utters a moral idea. When Shakespeare says, that

“We are such stuff  
As dreams are made of, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep,”

he utters a moral idea.

Voltaire was right in thinking that the energetic and profound treatment of moral ideas, in this large sense, is what distinguishes the English poetry. He sincerely meant praise, not dispraise or hint of limitation; and they err who suppose that poetic limitation is a necessary consequence of the fact, the fact being granted as Voltaire states it. If what distinguishes the greatest poets is their powerful and profound application of ideas to life, which surely no good critic will deny, then to prefix to the term ideas here the term moral makes hardly any difference, because human life itself is in so preponderating a degree moral.

It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life, — to the question: How to live. Morals are often treated in a narrow and false fashion; they are bound up with systems of thought and belief which have had their day; they are fallen into the hands of pedants and professional dealers; they grow tiresome to some of us. We find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against them; in a poetry which might take for its motto Omar Kheyam's words: “Let us make up in the tavern for the time which we have wasted in the mosque.” Or we find attractions in

a poetry indifferent to them; in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite. We delude ourselves in either case; and the best cure for our delusion is to let our minds rest upon that great and inexhaustible word *life*, until we learn to enter into its meaning. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life*; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards *life*.

Epictetus had a happy figure for things like the play of the senses, or literary form and finish, or argumentative ingenuity, in comparison with "the best and master thing" for us, as he called it, the concern, how to live. Some people were afraid of them, he said, or they disliked and undervalued them. Such people were wrong; they were unthankful or cowardly. But the things might also be over-prized, and treated as final when they are not. They bear to life the relation which inns bear to home. "As if a man, journeying home, and finding a nice inn on the road, and liking it, were to stay for ever at the inn! Man, thou hast forgotten thine object; thy journey was not *to* this, but *through* this. 'But this inn is taking.' And how many other inns, too, are taking, and how many fields and meadows! but as places of passage merely. You have an object, which is this: to get home, to do your duty to your family, friends, and fellow-countrymen, to attain inward freedom, serenity, happiness, contentment. Style takes your fancy, arguing takes your fancy, and you forget your home and want to make your abode with them and to stay with them, on the plea that they are taking. Who denies that they are taking? but as places of passage, as inns. And when I say this, you suppose me to be attacking the care for style, the care for argument. I am not; I attack the resting in them, the not looking to the end which is beyond them."

Now, when we come across a poet like Théophile Gautier, we have a poet who has taken up his abode at an inn, and never got farther. There may be inducements to this or that one of us, at this or that moment, to find delight in him, to cleave to him; but after all, we do not change the truth about him,—we only stay ourselves in his inn along with him. And when we come across a poet like Wordsworth, who sings

“Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope,  
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,  
Of blessed consolations in distress,  
Of moral strength and intellectual power,  
Of joy in widest commonalty spread” —

then we have a poet intent on “the best and master thing,” and who prosecutes his journey home. We say, for brevity’s sake, that he deals with *life*, because he deals with that in which life really consists. This is what Voltaire means to praise in the English poets,—this dealing with what is really life. But always it is the mark of the greatest poets that they deal with it; and to say that the English poets are remarkable for dealing with it, is only another way of saying, what is true, that in poetry the English genius has especially shown its power.

Wordsworth deals with it, and his greatness lies in his dealing with it so powerfully. I have named a number of celebrated poets above all of whom he, in my opinion, deserves to be placed. He is to be placed above poets like Voltaire, Dryden, Pope, Lessing, Schiller, because these famous personages, with a thousand gifts and merits, never, or scarcely ever, attain the distinctive accent and utterance of the high and genuine poets—

“Quique pii vates et Phœbo digna locuti,”

at all. Burns, Keats, Heine, not to speak of others in our list, have this accent;—who can doubt it? And at the



same time they have treasures of humour, felicity, passion, for which in Wordsworth we shall look in vain. Where, then, is Wordsworth's superiority? It is here; he deals with more of *life* than they do; he deals with *life*, as a whole, more powerfully.

No Wordsworthian will doubt this. Nay, the fervent Wordsworthian will add, as Mr. Leslie Stephen does, that Wordsworth's poetry is precious because his philosophy is sound; that his "ethical system is as distinctive and capable of exposition as Bishop Butler's"; that his poetry is informed by ideas which "fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought." But we must be on our guard against the Wordsworthians, if we want to secure for Wordsworth his due rank as a poet. The Wordsworthians are apt to praise him for the wrong things, and to lay far too much stress upon what they call his philosophy. His poetry is the reality, his philosophy,—so far, at least, as it may put on the form and habit of "a scientific system of thought," and the more that it puts them on,—is the illusion. Perhaps we shall one day learn to make this proposition general, and to say: Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion. But in Wordsworth's case, at any rate, we cannot do him justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy.

The *Excursion* abounds with philosophy, and therefore the *Excursion* is to the Wordsworthian what it never can be to the disinterested lover of poetry,—a satisfactory work. "Duty exists," says Wordsworth, in the *Excursion*; and then he proceeds thus—

". . . Immutably survive,  
For our support, the measures and the forms,  
Which an abstract Intelligence supplies,  
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not."

And the Wordsworthian is delighted, and thinks that here is a sweet union of philosophy and poetry. But the dis-



interested lover of poetry will feel that the lines carry us really not a step farther than the proposition which they would interpret; that they are a tissue of elevated but abstract verbiage, alien to the very nature of poetry.

Or let us come direct to the centre of Wordsworth's philosophy, as "an ethical system, as distinctive and capable of systematical exposition as Bishop Butler's" —

". . . One adequate support  
For the calamities of mortal life  
Exists, one only ; — an assured belief  
That the procession of our fate, howe'er  
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being  
Of infinite benevolence and power ;  
Whose everlasting purposes embrace  
All accidents, converting them to good."

That is doctrine such as we hear in church too, religious and philosophic doctrine; and the attached Wordsworthian loves passages of such doctrine, and brings them forward in proof of his poet's excellence. But however true the doctrine may be, it has, as here presented, none of the characters of *poetic* truth, the kind of truth which we require from a poet, and in which Wordsworth is really strong.

Even the "intimations" of the famous Ode, those corner-stones of the supposed philosophic system of Wordsworth, — the idea of the high instincts and affections coming out in childhood, testifying of a divine home recently left, and fading away as our life proceeds. — this idea, of undeniable beauty as a play of fancy, has itself not the character of poetic truth of the best kind; it has no real solidity. The instinct of delight in Nature and her beauty had no doubt extraordinary strength in Wordsworth himself as a child. But to say that universally this instinct is mighty in childhood, and tends to die away afterwards, is to say what is extremely doubtful. In many people, perhaps with the majority of educated persons, the love of nature is nearly impercep-

tible at ten years old, but strong and operative at thirty. In general we may say of these high instincts of early childhood, the base of the alleged systematic philosophy of Wordsworth, what Thucydides says of the early achievements of the Greek race: "It is impossible to speak with certainty of what is so remote; but from all that we can really investigate, I should say that they were no very great things."

Finally, the "scientific system of thought" in Wordsworth gives us at last such poetry as this, which the devout Wordsworthian accepts —

[ "O for the coming of that glorious time  
 When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth  
 And best protection, this Imperial Realm,  
 While she exacts allegiance, shall admit  
 An obligation, on her part, to *teach*  
 Them who are born to serve her and obey;  
 Binding herself by statute to secure,  
 For all the children whom her soil maintains,  
 The rudiments of letters, and inform  
 The mind with moral and religious truth."

Wordsworth calls Voltaire dull, and surely the production of these un-Voltairian lines must have been imposed on him as a judgment! One can hear them being quoted at a Social Science Congress; one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our dismal provincial towns; dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight; benches full of men with bald heads and women in spectacles; an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within and without to declaim these lines of Wordsworth; and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in thither, an unutterable sense of lamentation, and mourning, and woe!

"But turn we," as Wordsworth says, "from these bold, bad men," the haunters of Social Science Congresses. And let us be on our guard, too, against the exhibitors and extollers of a "scientific system of thought" in Wordsworth's

poetry. The poetry will never be seen aright while they thus exhibit it. The cause of its greatness is simple, and may be told quite simply. Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.

The source of joy from which he thus draws is the truest and most unfailing source of joy accessible to man. It is also accessible universally. Wordsworth brings us word, therefore, according to his own strong and characteristic line, he brings us word

“Of joy in widest commonalty spread.”

Here is an immense advantage for a poet. Wordsworth tells of what all seek, and tells of it at its truest and best source, and yet a source where all may go and draw for it.

Nevertheless, we are not to suppose that everything is precious which Wordsworth, standing even at this perennial and beautiful source, may give us. Wordsworthians are apt to talk as if it must be. They will speak with the same reverence of *The Sailor's Mother*, for example, as of *Lucy Gray*. They do their master harm by such lack of discrimination. *Lucy Gray* is a beautiful success; *The Sailor's Mother* is a failure. To give aright what he wishes to give, to interpret and render successfully, is not always within Wordsworth's own command. It is within no poet's command; here is the part of the Muse, the inspiration, the God, the “not ourselves.” In Wordsworth's case, the accident, for so it may almost be called, of inspiration, is of peculiar importance. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the inspiration is upon him; no poet, when it fails him, is so left “weak

as is a breaking wave." I remember hearing him say that "Goethe's poetry was not inevitable enough." The remark is striking and true; no line in Goethe, as Goethe said himself, but its maker knew well how it came there. Wordsworth is right, Goethe's poetry is not inevitable; not inevitable enough. But Wordsworth's poetry, when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him. He has no style. He was too conversant with Milton not to catch at times his master's manner, and he has fine Miltonic lines; but he has no assured poetic style of his own, like Milton. When he seeks to have a style he falls into ponderosity and pomposity. In the *Excursion* we have his style, as an artistic product of his own creation; and although Jeffrey completely failed to recognise Wordsworth's real greatness, he was yet not wrong in saying of the *Excursion*, as a work of poetic style: "This will never do." And yet magical as is that power, which Wordsworth has not, of assured and possessed poetic style, he has something which is an equivalent for it.

Every one who has any sense for these things feels the subtle turn, the heightening, which is given to a poet's verse by his genius for style. We can feel it in the

"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well" —

of Shakespeare; in the

". . . though fall'n on evil days,  
On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues" —

of Milton. It is the incomparable charm of Milton's power of poetic style which gives such worth to *Paradise Regained*, and makes a great poem of a work in which Milton's imagination does not soar high. Wordsworth has in constant possession, and at command, no style of this kind; but he had too poetic a nature, and had read the great

poets too well, not to catch, as I have already remarked, something of it occasionally. We find it not only in his Miltonic lines; we find it in such a phrase as this, where the manner is his own, not Milton's—

“ . . . the fierce confederate storm  
Of sorrow barricadoed evermore  
Within the walls of cities ; ”

although even here, perhaps, the power of style which is undeniable, is more properly that of eloquent prose than the subtle heightening and change wrought by genuine poetic style. It is style, again, and the elevation given by style, which chiefly makes the effectiveness of *Laodameia*. Still the right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from *Michael* —

“ And never lifted up a single stone.”

There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style, strictly so called, at all; yet it is expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind.

Wordsworth owed much to Burns, and a style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters, Burns could show him.

“ The poor inhabitant below  
Was quick to learn and wise to know,  
And keenly felt the friendly glow  
And softer flame ;  
But thoughtless follies laid him low  
And stain'd his name.”

Every one will be conscious of a likeness here to Wordsworth; and if Wordsworth did great things with this nobly plain manner, we must remember, what indeed he himself would always have been forward to acknowledge, that Burns used it before him.

Still Wordsworth's use of it has something unique and unmatchable. Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes; from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of *Resolution and Independence*; but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur.

Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique. His best poems are those which most perfectly exhibit this balance. I have a warm admiration for *Laodameia* and for the great *Ode*; but if I am to tell the very truth, I find *Laodameia* not wholly free from something artificial, and the great *Ode* not wholly free from something declamatory. If I had to pick out poems of a kind most perfectly to show Wordsworth's unique power, I should rather choose poems such as *Michael*, *The Fountain*, *The Highland Reaper*. And poems with the peculiar and unique beauty which distinguishes these, Wordsworth produced in considerable number; besides very many other poems of which the worth, although not so rare as the worth of these, is still exceedingly high.

On the whole, then, as I said at the beginning, not only is Wordsworth eminent by reason of the goodness of his best work, but he is eminent also by reason of the great body of good work which he has left to us. With the ancients I will not compare him. In many respects the ancients are far above us, and yet there is something that we demand which they can never give. Leaving the ancients, let us come to the poets and poetry of Christendom. Dante, Shakespeare,

Molière, Milton, Goethe, are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth. But I know not where else, among the moderns, we are to find his superiors.

To disengage the poems which show his power, and to present them to the English-speaking public and to the world, is the object of this volume. I by no means say that it contains all which in Wordsworth's poems is interesting. Except in the case of *Margaret*, a story composed separately from the rest of the *Excursion*, and which belongs to a different part of England, I have not ventured on detaching portions of poems, or on giving any piece otherwise than as Wordsworth himself gave it. But under the conditions imposed by this reserve, the volume contains, I think, everything, or nearly everything, which may best serve him with the majority of lovers of poetry, nothing which may disserve him.

I have spoken lightly of Wordsworthians; and if we are to get Wordsworth recognised by the public and by the world, we must recommend him not in the spirit of a clique, but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry. But I am a Wordsworthian myself. I can read with pleasure and edification *Peter Bell*, and the whole series of *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, and the address to Mr. Wilkinson's spade, and even the *Thanksgiving Ode*; — everything of Wordsworth, I think, except *Vaudracour and Julia*. It is not for nothing that one has been brought up in the veneration of a man so truly worthy of homage; that one has seen him and heard him, lived in his neighbourhood, and been familiar with his country. No Wordsworthian has a tenderer affection for this pure and sage master than I, or is less really offended by his defects. But Wordsworth is something more than the pure and sage master of a small band of devoted followers, and we ought not to rest satisfied until he is seen to be what he is. He is one of the very chief glories of Eng-



lish Poetry; and by nothing is England so glorious as by her poetry. Let us lay aside every weight which hinders our getting him recognised as this, and let our one study be to bring to pass, as widely as possible and as truly as possible, his own word concerning his poems: "They will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier."

## ARNOLD'S POEMS.

### RUGBY CHAPEL.

NOVEMBER

COLDLY, sadly descends  
The autumn evening. The field  
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts  
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,  
Fade into dimness apace,  
Silent; — hardly a shout  
From a few boys late at their play!  
The lights come out in the street,  
In the school-room windows; — but cold,  
Solemn, unlighted, austere,  
Through the gathering darkness, arise  
The chapel-walls, in whose bound  
Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom  
Of the autumn evening. But ah!  
That word, *gloom*, to my mind  
Brings thee back, in the light  
Of thy radiant vigor, again;  
In the gloom of November we pass'd  
Days not dark at thy side;  
Seasons impair'd not the ray  
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.  
Such thou wast! and I stand  
In the autumn evening, and think  
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round  
Since thou arodest to tread,  
In the summer-morning, the road  
Of death, at a call unforeseen,  
Sudden. For fifteen years,  
We who till then in thy shade  
Rest'd as under the boughs  
Of a mighty oak, have endured  
Sunshine and rain as we might,  
Bare, unshaded, alone,  
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore  
Tarriest thou now? For that force,  
Surely, has not been left vain!  
Somewhere, surely, afar,  
In the sounding labor-house vast  
Of being, is practised that strength,  
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,  
Conscious or not of the past,  
Still thou performest the word  
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live —  
Prompt, unwearied, as here!  
Still thou upraisest with zeal  
The humble good from the ground,  
Sternly represses the bad!  
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse  
Those who with half-open eyes  
Tread the border-land dim  
'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,  
Succorest! — this was thy work,  
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life  
Of mortal men on the earth? —  
Most men eddy about  
Here and there — eat and drink,  
Chatter and love and hate,  
Gather and squander, are raised  
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,  
Striving blindly, achieving  
Nothing; and then they die —  
Perish; — and no one asks  
Who or what they have been,  
More than he asks what waves,  
In the moonlit solitudes mild  
Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,  
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst  
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,  
Not with the crowd to be spent,  
Not without aim to go round  
In an eddy of purposeless dust,  
Effort unmeaning and vain.  
Ah yes! some of us strive  
Not without action to die  
Fruitless, but something to snatch  
From dull oblivion, nor all  
Glut the devouring grave!  
We, we have chosen our path —  
Path to a clear-purposed goal,  
Path of advance! — but it leads  
A long, steep journey, through sunk  
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.  
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth —  
Then, on the height, comes the storm.

Thunder crashes from rock  
To rock, the cataracts reply,  
Lightnings dazzle our eyes.  
Roaring torrents have breach'd  
The track, the stream-bed descends  
In the place where the wayfarer once  
Planted his footstep — the spray  
Boils o'er its borders! aloft  
The unseen snow-beds dislodge  
Their hanging ruin; alas,  
Havoc is made in our train!  
Friends, who set forth at our side,  
Falter, are lost in the storm.  
We, we only are left!  
With frowning foreheads, with lips  
Sternly compress'd, we strain on,  
On — and at nightfall at last  
Come to the end of our way,  
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;  
Where the gaunt and taciturn host  
Stands on the threshold, the wind  
Shaking his thin white hairs —  
Holds his lantern to scan  
Our storm-beat figures; and asks:  
Whom in our party we bring?  
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: we bring  
Only ourselves! we lost  
Sight of the rest in the storm.  
Hardly ourselves we fought through,  
Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.  
Friends, companions, and train,  
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*  
 Be saved, my father! *alone*  
 Conquer and come to thy goal,  
 Leaving the rest in the wild.  
 We were weary, and we  
 Fearful, and we in our march  
 Fain to drop down and to die.  
 Still thou turnedst, and still  
 Beckonedst the trembler, and still  
 Gavest the weary thy hand.

If, in the paths of the world,  
 Stones might have wounded thy feet,  
 Toil or dejection have tried  
 Thy spirit, of that we saw  
 Nothing — to us thou wast still  
 Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!  
 Therefore to thee it was given  
 Many to save with thyself;  
 And, at the end of thy day,  
 O faithful shepherd! to come,  
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe  
 In the noble and great who are gone;  
 Pure souls honor'd and blest  
 By former ages, who else —  
 Such, so soulless, so poor,  
 Is the race of men whom I see —  
 Seem'd but a dream of the heart,  
 Seem'd but a cry of desire.  
 Yes! I believed that there lived  
 Others like thee in the past,  
 Not like the men of the crowd

Who all round me to-day  
Bluster or cringe, and make life  
Hideous, and arid, and vile;  
But souls temper'd with fire,  
Fervent, heroic, and good,  
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God! — or sons  
Shall I not call you? because  
Not as servants ye knew  
Your Father's innermost mind,  
His, who unwillingly sees  
One of his little ones lost —  
Yours is the praise, if mankind  
Hath not as yet in its march  
Fainted, and fallen, and died!

See! In the rocks of the world  
Marches the host of mankind,  
A feeble, wavering line.  
Where are they tending? — A God  
Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.  
Ah, but the way is so long!  
Years they have been in the wild!  
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,  
Rising all round, overawe;  
Factions divide them, their host  
Threatens to break, to dissolve.  
— Ah, keep, keep them combined!  
Else, of the myriads who fill  
That army, not one shall arrive;  
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks  
Stagger for ever in vain,  
Die one by one in the waste.



Then, in such hour of need  
Of your fainting, dispirited race,  
Ye, like angels, appear,  
Radiant with ardor divine!  
Beacons of hope, ye appear!  
Languor is not in your heart,  
Weakness is not in your word,  
Weariness not on your brow.  
Ye alight in our van! at your voice,  
Panic, despair, flee away.  
Ye move through the ranks, recall  
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,  
Praise, re-inspire the brave!  
Order, courage, return.  
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,  
Follow your steps as ye go.  
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,  
Strengthen the wavering line,  
Stablish, continue our march,  
On, to the bound of the waste,  
On, to the City of God.

## DOVER BEACH.

THE sea is calm to-night.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; — on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd sand,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,

At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The sea of faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

#### THE FORSAKEN MERMAN.

COME, dear children, let us away;  
Down and away below!  
Now my brothers call from the bay,

Now the great winds shoreward blow,  
Now the salt tides seaward flow;  
Now the wild white horses play,  
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.  
Children dear, let us away!  
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go —  
Call once yet!  
In a voice that she will know:  
“Margaret! Margaret!”  
Children’s voices should be dear  
(Call once more) to a mother’s ear;  
Children’s voices, wild with pain —  
Surely she will come again!  
Call her once and come away;  
This way, this way!  
“Mother dear, we cannot stay!  
The wild white horses foam and fret.”  
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;  
Call no more!  
One last look at the white-wall’d town,  
And the little gray church on the windy shore;  
Then come down!  
She will not come though you call all day;  
Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday  
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?  
In the caverns where we lay,  
Through the surf and through the swell,  
The far-off sound of a silver bell?

Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,  
Where the winds are all asleep;  
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,  
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,  
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,  
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;  
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,  
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;  
Where great whales come sailing by,  
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,  
Round the world for ever and aye?  
When did music come this way?  
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday  
(Call yet once) that she went away?  
Once she sate with you and me,  
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,  
And the youngest sate on her knee.  
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,  
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.  
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea;  
She said: "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray  
In the little gray church on the shore to-day.  
'Twill be Easter-time in the world — ah me!  
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee."  
I said: "Go up, dear heart, through the waves;  
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!"  
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.  
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?  
"The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan;  
Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say;  
Come!" I said; and we rose through the surf in the bay.

We went up the beach, by the sandy down  
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town;  
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,  
To the little gray church on the windy hill.  
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,  
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.  
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,  
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.  
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:  
"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!  
Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone;  
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."  
But, ah, she gave me never a look,  
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book!  
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.  
Come away, children, call no more!  
Come away, come down, call no more!

Down, down, down!  
Down to the depths of the sea!  
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,  
Singing most joyfully.  
Hark what she sings: "O joy, O joy,  
For the humming street, and the child with its toy!  
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well;  
For the wheel where I spun,  
And the blessed light of the sun!"  
And so she sings her fill,  
Singing most joyfully,  
Till the spindle drops from her hand,  
And the whizzing wheel stands still.  
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,  
And over the sand at the sea;  
And her eyes are set in a stare;

And anon there breaks a sigh,  
And anon there drops a tear,  
From a sorrow-clouded eye,  
And a heart sorrow-laden,  
A long, long sigh;  
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden  
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children;  
Come children, come down!  
The hoarse wind blows coldly;  
Lights shine in the town.  
She will start from her slumber  
When gusts shake the door;  
She will hear the winds howling,  
Will hear the waves roar.  
We shall see, while above us  
The waves roar and whirl,  
A ceiling of amber,  
A pavement of pearl.  
Singing: "Here came a mortal,  
But faithless was she!  
And alone dwell forever  
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight,  
When soft the winds blow,  
When clear falls the moonlight,  
When spring-tides are low;  
When sweet airs come seaward  
From heaths starr'd with broom,  
And high rocks throw mildly  
On the blanch'd sands a gloom;  
Up the still, glistening beaches,  
Up the creeks we will hie,

Over banks of bright seaweed  
The ebb-tide leaves dry.  
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,  
At the white, sleeping town;  
At the church on the hill-side —  
And then come back down.  
Singing: "There dwells a loved one,  
But cruel is she!  
She left lonely for ever  
The kings of the sea."

### BALDER DEAD.

"Balder the Good having been tormented with terrible dreams, indicating that his life was in great peril, communicated them to the assembled Æsir, who resolved to conjure all things to avert from him the threatened danger. Then Frigga exacted an oath from fire and water, from iron, and all other metals, as well as from stones, earths, diseases, beasts, birds, poisons, and creeping things, that none of them would do any harm to Balder. When this was done it became a favorite pastime of the Æsir, at the meetings, to get Balder to stand up and serve them as a mark, some hurling darts at him, some stones, while others hewed at him with their swords and battle-axes, for do what they would, none of them could harm him, and this was regarded by all as a great honor shown to Balder. But when Loki beheld the scene he was sorely vexed that Balder was not hurt. Assuming, therefore, the shape of a woman, he went to Fensalir, the mansion of Frigga. That goddess, when she saw the pretended woman, inquired of her if she knew what the Æsir were doing at their meetings. She replied, that they were throwing darts and stones at Balder without being able to hurt him.

"'Ay,' said Frigga, 'neither metal nor wood can hurt Balder, for I have exacted an oath from all of them.'

"'What!' exclaimed the woman, 'have all things sworn to spare Balder?'

"'All things,' replied Frigga, 'except one little shrub that grows on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called Mistletoe, and which I thought too young and feeble to crave an oath from.'



“As soon as Loki heard this he went away, and, resuming his natural shape, cut off the Mistletoe, and repaired to the place where the gods were assembled. There he found Hödur standing apart, without partaking of the sports, on account of his blindness, and going up to him said, ‘Why dost thou not also throw something at Balder?’

“‘Because I am blind,’ answered Hödur, ‘and see not where Balder is, and have, moreover, nothing to throw with.’

“‘Come, then,’ said Loki, ‘do like the rest, and show honor to Balder by throwing this twig at him, and I will direct thy arm toward the place where he stands.’

“Hödur then took the Mistletoe, and, under the guidance of Loki, darted it at Balder, who, pierced through and through, fell down lifeless.” — *Edda*.

#### I. SENDING.

So on the floor lay Balder dead ; and round  
Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts, and spears,  
Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown  
At Balder, whom no weapon pierced or clove ;  
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough  
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave  
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw —  
’Gainst that alone had Balder’s life no charm.

And all the Gods and all the Heroes came,  
And stood round Balder on the bloody floor,  
Weeping and wailing ; and Valhalla rang  
Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries ;  
And on the tables stood the untasted meats,  
And in the horns and gold-rimm’d skulls the wine.  
And now would night have fall’n, and found them yet  
Wailing ; but otherwise was Odin’s will.  
And thus the father of the ages spake : —

“Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of wail !  
Not to lament in was Valhalla made.  
If any here might weep for Balder’s death,

I most might weep, his father ; such a son  
I lose to-day, so bright, so loved a God.  
But he has met that doom, which long ago  
The Nornies, when his mother bare him, spun,  
And fate set seal, that so his end must be.  
Balder has met his death, and ye survive —  
Weep him an hour, but what can grief avail?  
For ye yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet your doom,  
All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,  
And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all.  
But ours we shall not meet, when that day comes,  
With women's tears and weak complaining cries —  
Why should we meet another's portion so?  
Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,  
With cold dry eyes, and hearts composed and stern,  
To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven.  
By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,  
The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
Be strictly cared for, in the appointed day.  
Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning dawns,  
Bring wood to the seashore to Balder's ship,  
And on the deck build high a funeral-pile,  
And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and put  
Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea  
To burn ; for that is what the dead desire."

So spake the King of Gods, and straightway rose,  
And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode ;  
And from the hall of Heaven he rode away  
To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,  
The mount, from whence his eye surveys the world.  
And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs  
To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men.  
And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze  
Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow ;

And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind,  
Fair men, who live in holes under the ground ;  
Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,  
Nor tow'rd Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods ;  
For well he knew the Gods would heed his word,  
And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre

But in Valhalla all the Gods went back  
From around Balder, all the Heroes went ;  
And left his body stretch'd upon the floor.  
And on their golden chairs they sate again,  
Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven ;  
And before each the cooks who served them placed  
New messes of the boar Serimner's flesh,  
And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead.  
So they, with pent-up hearts and tearless eyes,  
Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank,  
While twilight fell, and sacred night came on.

But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods  
In Odin's hall, and went through Asgard streets,  
And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd  
Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the wall ;  
Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God.  
Down to the margin of the roaring sea  
He came, and sadly went along the sand,  
Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs  
Where in and out the screaming seafowl fly ;  
Until he came to where a gully breaks  
Through the cliff-wall, and a fresh stream runs down  
From the high moors behind, and meets the sea.  
There, in the glen, Fensaler stands, the house  
Of Frea, honor'd mother of the Gods,  
And shows its lighted windows to the main.  
There he went up, and pass'd the open doors ;  
And in the hall he found those women old,

The prophetesses, who by rite eterne  
On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire  
Both night and day; and by the inner wall  
Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,  
With folded hands, revolving things to come.  
To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said: —  
“Mother, a child of bale thou bar'st in me!  
For, first thou barest me with blinded eyes,  
Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven;  
And, after that, of ignorant witless mind  
Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul;  
That I alone must take the branch from Lok,  
The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
And cast it at the dear-loved Balder's breast  
At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw —  
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.  
Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly,  
For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven?  
Can I, O mother, bring them Balder back?  
Or — for thou know'st the fates, and things allow'd —  
Can I with Hela's power a compact strike,  
And make exchange, and give my life for his?”

He spoke: the mother of the Gods replied: —  
“Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,  
Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these?  
That one, long portion'd with his doom of death,  
Should change his lot, and fill another's life,  
And Hela yield to this, and let him go!  
On Balder Death hath laid her hand, not thee;  
Nor doth she count this life a price for that.  
For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,  
Would freely die to purchase Balder back,  
And wend themselves to Hela's gloomy realm.  
For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven

Which Gods and heroes lead, in feast and fray,  
Waiting the darkness of the final times,  
That one should grudge its loss for Balder's sake,  
Balder their joy, so bright, so loved a God.  
But fate withstands, and laws forbid this way.  
Yet in my secret mind one way I know,  
Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail;  
But much must still be tried, which shall but fail."

And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and said: —  
"What way is this, O mother, that thou show'st?  
Is it a matter which a God might try?"

And straight the mother of the Gods replied: —  
"There is a road which leads to Hela's realm,  
Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven.  
Who goes that way must take no other horse  
To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse, alone.  
Nor must he choose that common path of Gods  
Which every day they come and go in Heaven,  
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
Past Midgard fortress down to earth and men.  
But he must tread a dark untravell'd road  
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and ride  
Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,  
Through valleys deep-engulph'd, with roaring streams  
And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge  
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
Not Bifrost, but that bridge a damsel keeps,  
Who tells the passing troops of dead their way  
To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's realm.  
And she will bid him northward steer his course.  
Then he will journey through no lighted land,  
Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set;  
But he must ever watch the northern Bear,  
Who from her frozen height with jealous eye

Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south,  
And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.  
And straight he will come down to Ocean's strand —  
Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world,  
And on whose marge the ancient giants dwell.  
But he will reach its unknown northern shore,  
Far, far, beyond the utmost giant's home,  
At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow.  
And he must fare across the dismal ice  
Northward, until he meets a stretching wall  
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.  
But then he must dismount, and on the ice  
Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
And make him leap the grate, and come within,  
And he will see stretch round him Hela's realm,  
The plains of Nifheim, where dwell the dead,  
And hear the roaring of the streams of Hell.  
And he will see the feeble, shadowy tribes,  
And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's throne.  
Then must he not regard the wailful ghosts  
Who all will flit, like eddying leaves, around;  
But he must straight accost their solemn queen,  
And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,  
Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven  
For Balder, whom she holds by right below;  
If haply he may melt her heart with words,  
And make her yield, and give him Balder back."

She spoke; but Hoder answer'd her and said: —  
"Mother, a dreadful way is this thou show'st;  
No journey for a sightless God to go!"

And straight the mother of the Gods replied: —  
"Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my son.  
But he whom first thou meetest when thou com'st  
To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way,

Shall go; and I will be his guide unseen."

She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil,  
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands,  
But at the central hearth those women old,  
Who while the Mother spake had ceased their toil,  
Began again to heap the sacred fire.  
And Hoder turn'd, and left his mother's house,  
Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea;  
And came again down to the roaring waves,  
And back along the beach to Asgard went,  
Pondering on that which Frea said should be.

But night came down, and darken'd Asgard streets;  
Then from their loathed feasts the Gods arose,  
And lighted torches, and took up the corpse  
Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall,  
And laid it on a bier, and bare him home  
Through the fast-darkening streets to his own house,  
Breidablik, on whose columns Balder graved  
The enchantments that recall the dead to life.  
For wise he was, and many curious arts,  
Postures of runes, and healing herbs he knew;  
Unhappy! but that art he did not know,  
To keep his own life safe, and see the sun.  
There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,  
And each bespake him as he laid him down:

"Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne  
Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,  
So thou might'st live, and still delight the Gods!"

They spake; and each went home to his own house.  
But there was one, the first of all the Gods  
For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven;  
Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,  
Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house,  
Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,



Against the harbor, by the city-wall.  
Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up  
From the sea cityward, and knew his step;  
Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,  
For it grew dark; but Hoder touch'd his arm.  
And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers  
Brushes across a tired traveller's face  
Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,  
On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,  
And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by —  
So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said: —

“Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with dawn  
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back;  
And they shall be thy guides, who have the power.”

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappear'd.  
And Hermod gazed into the night, and said: —

“Who is it utters through the dark his hest  
So quickly, and will wait for no reply?  
The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's voice.  
Howbeit I will see, and do his hest;  
For there rang note divine in that command.”

So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod came  
Home, and lay down to sleep in his own house;  
And all the Gods lay down in their own homes.  
And Hoder too came home, distraught with grief,  
Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods;  
And he went in, and shut the door, and fixt  
His sword upright, and fell on it, and died.

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,  
The throne, from which his eye surveys the world;  
And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode  
To Asgard. And the stars came out in heaven,  
High over Asgard, to light home the King.  
But fiercely Odin gallop'd, moved in heart;

And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came.  
And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang  
Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets,  
And the Gods trembled on their golden beds  
Hearing the wrathful Father coming home —  
For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came.  
And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left  
Sleipner; and Sleipner went to his own stall;  
And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.

But in Breidablik, Nanna, Balder's wife,  
Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,  
And stood by Balder lying on his bier.  
And at his head and feet she station'd Scalds  
Who in their lives were famous for their song;  
These o'er the corpse intoned a plaintive strain,  
A dirge — and Nanna and her train replied.  
And far into the night they wail'd their dirge.  
But when their souls were satisfied with wail,  
They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went  
Into an upper chamber, and lay down;  
And Frea sealed her tired lids with sleep.

And 'twas when night is bordering hard on dawn,  
When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low;  
Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,  
In garb, in form, in feature as he was,  
Alive; and still the rays were round his head  
Which were his glorious mark in Heaven; he stood  
Over against the curtain of the bed,  
And gazed on Nanna as she slept, and spake: —

“Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st thy woe!  
Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,  
Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek; but thou,  
Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep.  
Sleep on; I watch thee, and am here to aid.

Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul!  
Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.  
For with to-morrow's dawn the Gods prepare  
To gather wood, and build a funeral-pile  
Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,  
That sad, sole honor of the dead; and thee  
They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,  
With me, for thus ordains the common rite.  
But it shall not be so; but mild, but swift,  
But painless shall a stroke from Frea come,  
To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,  
And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee.  
And well I know that by no stroke of death,  
Tardy or swift, would'st thou be loath to die,  
So it restored thee, Nanna, to my side,  
Whom thou so well hast loved; but I can smooth  
Thy way, and this, at least, my prayers avail.  
Yes, and I fain would altogether ward  
Death from thy head, and with the Gods in Heaven  
Prolong thy life, though not by thee desired —  
But right bars this, not only thy desire.  
Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead  
In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm;  
And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,  
Whom Hela with austere control presides.  
For of the race of Gods is no one there,  
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn queen;  
And all the nobler souls of mortal men  
On battle-field have met their death, and now  
Feast in Valhalla, in my father's hall;  
Only the inglorious sort are there below,  
The old, the cowards, and the weak are there —  
Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay.  
But even there, O Nanna, we might find

Some solace in each other's look and speech,  
Wandering together through that gloomy world,  
And talking of the life we led in Heaven,  
While we yet lived, among the other Gods."

He spake, and straight his lineaments began  
To fade; and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out  
Her arms towards him with a cry — but he  
Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd.  
And as the woodman sees a little smoke  
Hang in the air, afield, and disappear,  
So Balder faded in the night away.  
And Nanna on her bed sank back; but then  
Frea, the mother of the Gods, with stroke  
Painless and swift, set free her airy soul,  
Which took, on Balder's track, the way below;  
And instantly the sacred morn appear'd.

## II. JOURNEY TO THE DEAD.

FORTH from the east, up the ascent of Heaven,  
Day drove his courser, with the shining mane;  
And in Valhalla, from his gable-perch,  
The golden-crested cock began to crow.  
Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night,  
With shrill and dismal cries that bird shall crow,  
Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven;  
But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note,  
To wake the Gods and Heroes to their tasks.  
And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke.  
And from their beds the Heroes rose, and donn'd  
Their arms, and led their horses from the stall,  
And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court  
Were ranged; and then the daily fray began.  
And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn,  
'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and blood;

But all at night return to Odin's hall,  
Woundless and fresh ; such lot is theirs in Heaven.  
And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth  
Tow'rd earth and fights of men ; and at their side  
Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode ;  
And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
Past Midgard fortress, down to earth they came ;  
There through some battle-field, where men fall fast,  
Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride,  
And pick the bravest warriors out for death,  
Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven  
To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall.

But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,  
Into the tilt-yard, where the Heroes fought,  
To feast their eyes with looking on the fray ;  
Nor did they to their judgment-place repair  
By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,  
Where they hold council, and give laws for men.  
But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,  
To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold ;  
Where are in circle ranged twelve golden chairs,  
And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne.  
There all the Gods in silence sate them down ;  
And thus the Father of the ages spake : —

“Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,  
With all, which it beseems the dead to have,  
And make a funeral-pile on Balder's ship ;  
On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.  
But Hermod, thou, take Sleipner, and ride down  
To Hela's kindgom, to ask Balder back.”

So said he ; and the Gods arose, and took  
Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor,  
Shouldering his hammer, which the giants know.  
Forth wended they, and drove their steeds before.

And up the dewy mountain-tracks they fared  
To the dark forests, in the early dawn;  
And up and down, and side and slant they roam'd.  
And from the glens all day an echo came  
Of crashing falls; for with his hammer Thor  
Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines,  
And burst their roots, while to their tops the Gods  
Made fast the woven ropes, and haled them down,  
And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the sward,  
And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw,  
And drave them homeward; and the snorting steeds  
Went straining through the crackling brushwood down,  
And by the darkling forest-paths the Gods  
Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried boughs.

And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd  
Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,  
And loosed them of their loads on the seashore,  
And ranged the wood in stacks by Balder's ship;  
And every God went home to his own house.

But when the Gods were to the forest gone,  
Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth  
And saddled him; before that, Sleipner brook'd  
No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,  
On his broad back no lesser rider bore;  
Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,  
Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,  
Knowing the God they went to seek, how dear.  
But Hermod mounted him, and sadly fared  
In silence up the dark untravell'd road  
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and went  
All day; and daylight waned, and night came on.  
And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,  
Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,  
Through valleys deep-engulph'd, by roaring streams.

And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge  
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
And on the bridge a damsel watching arm'd,  
In the strait passage, at the farther end,  
Where the road issues between walling rocks.  
Scant space that warder left for passers by ; —  
But as when cowherds in October drive  
Their kine across a snowy mountain-pass  
To winter-pasture on the southern side,  
And on the ridge a wagon chokes the way,  
Wedged in the snow ; then painfully the hinds  
With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,  
Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow  
To right and left, and warm steam fills the air —  
So on the bridge that damsel block'd the way,  
And question'd Hermod as he came, and said : —

“Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse  
Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream  
Rumbles and shakes ? Tell me thy race and home.  
But yestermorn, five troops of dead pass'd by,  
Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,  
Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone.  
And thou hast flesh and color on thy cheeks,  
Like men who live, and draw the vital air ;  
Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceased,  
Souls bound below, my daily passers here.”

And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd her : —  
“O damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son  
Of Odin ; and my high-roof'd house is built  
Far hence, in Asgard, in the city of Gods ;  
And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride.  
And I come, sent this road on Balder's track ;  
Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge or no ? ”

He spake, the warder of the bridge replied : —



“O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods  
Or of the horses of the Gods resound  
Upon my bridge; and, when they cross, I know.  
Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the road  
Below there, to the north, tow'rd Hela's realm.  
From here the cold white mist can be discern'd,  
Nor lit with sun, but through the darksome air  
By the dim vapor-blotted light of stars,  
Which hangs over the ice where lies the road.  
For in that ice are lost those northern streams,  
Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,  
Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run,  
The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne.  
There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,  
Hela's pale swarms; and there was Balder bound.  
Ride on! pass free! but he by this is there.”

She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left him room,  
And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by  
Across the bridge; then she took post again.  
But northward Hermod rode, the way below;  
And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun,  
But by the blotted light of stars, he fared.  
And he came down to Ocean's northern strand,  
At the drear ice, beyond the giants' home.  
Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice  
Still north, until he met a stretching wall  
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.  
Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,  
On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
And made him leap the grate, and came within.  
And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,  
The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,  
And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.  
For near the wall the river of Roaring flows.

Outmost; the others near the centre run —  
The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain;  
And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy tribes; —  
And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds  
Of some clear river, issuing from a lake,  
On autumn-days, before they cross the sea;  
And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs  
Quivering, and others skim the river-streams,  
And their quick twittering fills the banks and shores —  
So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts.  
Women, and infants, and young men who died  
Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields;  
And old men, known to glory, but their star  
Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,  
Not wounds; yet, dying, they their armor wore  
And now have chief regard in Hela's realm.  
Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew,  
Greeted of none, disfeatured and forlorn —  
Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive;  
And round them still the wattled hurdles hung,  
Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them deep  
To hide their shameful memory from men.  
But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne  
Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,  
And Hela set thereon, with countenance stern;  
And thus bespake him first the solemn queen: —  
“Unhappy, how hast thou endured to leave  
The light, and journey to the cheerless land  
Where idly flit about the feeble shades?  
How didst thou cross the bridge o'er Giall's stream,  
Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore?  
Or how o'erleap the grate that bars the wall?”  
She spake: but down off Sleipner Hermod sprang,  
And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her knees;

And spake, and mild entreated her, and said:—

“O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare  
Their errands to each other, or the ways  
They go? the errand and the way is known.  
Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief we have in Heaven  
For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right below.  
Restore him! for what part fulfils he here?  
Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,  
And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy?  
Not for such end, O queen, thou hold'st thy realm.  
For Heaven was Balder born, the city of Gods  
And Heroes, where they live in light and joy.  
Thither restore him, for his place is there!”

He spoke; and grave replied the solemn queen:—  
“Hermod, for he thou art, thou son of Heaven!  
A strange unlikely errand, sure, is thine.  
Do the Gods send to me to make them blest?  
Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtained.  
Three mighty children to my father Lok  
Did Angerbode, the giantess, bring forth—  
Fenris the wolf, the Serpent huge, and me.  
Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,  
Who since in your despite hath wax'd amain,  
And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world;  
Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw,  
And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule;  
While on his island in the lake afar,  
Made fast to the bored crag, by wile not strength  
Subdued, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.  
Lok still subsists in Heaven, our father wise,  
Your mate, though loathed, and feasts in Odin's hall;  
But him too foes await, and netted snares,  
And in a cave a bed of needle-rocks,  
And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall.

Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds,  
And with himself set us his offspring free,  
When he guides Muspel's children to their bourne.  
Till then in peril or in pain we live,  
Wrought by the Gods — and ask the Gods our aid?  
Howbeit, we abide our day; till then,  
We do not as some feebler haters do —  
Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,  
Helpless to better us, or ruin them.  
Come then! if Balder was so dear beloved,  
And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's —  
Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restored.  
Show me through all the world the signs of grief!  
Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops!  
Let all that lives and moves upon the earth  
Weep him, and all that is without life weep;  
Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him; plants and stones!  
So shall I know the lost was dear indeed,  
And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven."

She spake; and Hermod answer'd her, and said:  
"Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.  
But come, declare me this, and truly tell:  
May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail,  
Or is it here withheld to greet the dead?"

He spake, and straightway Hela answered him:—  
"Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold  
Converse; his speech remains, though he be dead."

And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and spake:—  
"Even in the abode of death, O Balder, hail!  
Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,  
The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven;  
Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd.  
For not unmindful of thee are the Gods,  
Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell;

Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm.  
And sure of all the happiest far art thou  
Who ever have been known in earth or Heaven;  
Alive, thou wast of Gods the most beloved,  
And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side,  
Here, and hast honor among all the dead."

He spake; and Balder utter'd him reply,  
But feebly, as a voice far off; he said:—

"Hermod the nimble, gild me not my death!  
Better to live a serf, a captured man,  
Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,  
Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead.  
And now I count not of these terms as safe  
To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,  
Though I be loved, and many mourn my death;  
For double-minded ever was the seed  
Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give.  
Howbeit, report thy message; and therewith,  
To Odin, to my father, take this ring,  
Memorial of me, whether saved or no;  
And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen  
Me sitting here below by Hela's side,  
Crown'd, having honor among all the dead."

He spake, and raised his hand, and gave the ring.  
And with inscrutable regard the queen  
Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb.  
But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more  
Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn queen;  
Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride  
Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to Heaven.  
And to the wall he came, and found the grate  
Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice.  
And o'er the ice he fared to Ocean's strand,  
And up from thence, a wet and misty road,

To the arm'd damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream.  
Worse was that way to go than to return,  
For him; — for others all return is barr'd.  
Nine days he took to do, two to return,  
And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven.  
And as a traveller in the early dawn  
To the steep edge of some great valley comes,  
Through which a river flows, and sees, beneath,  
Clouds of white rolling vapors fill the vale,  
But o'er them, on the farther slope, descries  
Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with sun —  
So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven.  
And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air  
Of Heaven; and mightily, as wing'd, he flew.  
And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise;  
And he drew near, and heard no living voice  
In Asgard; and the golden halls were dumb.  
Then Hermod knew what labor held the Gods;  
And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd  
Under the gate-house to the sands, and found  
The Gods on the sea-shore by Balder's ship.

## III. FUNERAL.

THE Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,  
Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither borne;  
And Hermod came down tow'rds them from the gate.  
And Lok, the father of the serpent, first  
Beheld him come, and to his neighbor spake: —  
“See, here is Hermod, who comes single back  
From Hell; and shall I tell thee how he seems?  
Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog,  
Some morn, at market, in a crowded town —  
Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain,  
And follows this man after that, for hours;

And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls  
Before a stranger's threshold, not his home,  
With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue  
Hangs quivering out between his dust-smear'd jaws,  
And piteously he eyes the passers by;  
But home his master comes to his own farm,  
Far in the country, wondering where he is —  
So Hermod comes to-day unfollow'd home."

And straight his neighbor, moved with wrath, replied: —  
"Deceiver! fair in form, but false in heart!  
Enemy, mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate —  
Peace, lest our father Odin hear thee gibe!  
Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,  
And bind thy carcass, like a bale, with cords,  
And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim!  
If clear from plotting Balder's death, to swim;  
But deep, if thou devised'st it, to drown,  
And perish, against fate, before thy day."

So they two soft to one another spake.  
But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw  
His messenger; and he stood forth, and cried.  
And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down,  
And in his father's hand put Sleipner's rein,  
And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said: —

"Odin, my father, and ye, Gods of Heaven!  
Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I come.  
Into the joyless kingdom have I been,  
Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes  
Of ghosts, and communed with their solemn queen;  
And to your prayer she sends you this reply:  
*Show her through all the world the signs of grief!*  
*Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops!*  
*Let Gods, men, brutes, beweepe him; plants and stones:*  
*So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,*



*And bend her heart, and give you Balder back.*

He spoke; and all the Gods to Odin look'd;  
And straight the Father of the ages said: —

“Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.  
But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds,  
And in procession all come near, and weep  
Balder; for that is what the dead desire.  
When ye enough have wept, then build a pile  
Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire  
Out of our sight; that we may turn from grief,  
And lead, as rest, our daily life in Heaven.”

He spoke, and the Gods arm'd; and Odin donn'd  
His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold,  
And led the way on Sleipner; and the rest  
Follow'd, in tears, their father and their king.  
And thrice in arms around the head they rode,  
Weeping; the sands were wetted, and their arms,  
With their thick-falling tears — so good a friend  
They mourn'd that day, so bright, so loved a God.  
And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands  
On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail: —

“Farewell, O Balder, bright and loved, my son!  
In that great day, the twilight of the Gods,  
When Muspel's children shall beleaguer Heaven,  
Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy arm.”

Thou camest near the next, O Warrior Thor!  
Shouldering thy hammer, in thy chariot drawn,  
Swaying the long-hair'd goats with silver'd rein;  
And over Balder's corpse these words didst say: —

“Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome land,  
And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,  
Now, and I know not how they prize thee there —  
But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and mourn'd  
For haughty spirits and high wraths are rife

Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven,  
As among those whose joy and work is war;  
And daily strifes arise, and angry words.  
But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,  
Heard no one ever an injurious word  
To God or Hero, but thou keptest back  
The others, laboring to compose their brawls.  
Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind!  
For we lose him, who smoothed all strife in Heaven."

He spake, and all the Gods assenting wail'd.  
And Freya next came nigh, with golden tears;  
The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all  
Most honor'd after Frea, Odin's wife.  
Her long ago the wandering Oder took  
To mate, but left her to roam distant lands;  
Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears of gold.  
Names hath she many; Vanadis on earth  
They call her, Freya is her name in Heaven;  
She in her hands took Balder's head, and spake: —

"Balder, my brother, thou art gone a road  
Unknown and long, and haply on that way  
My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast met,  
For in the paths of Heaven he is not found.  
Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wast  
To his neglected wife, and what he is,  
And wring his heart with shame, to hear thy word!  
For he, my husband, left me here to pine,  
Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart  
First drove him from me into distant lands;  
Since then I vainly seek him through the world,  
And weep from shore to shore my golden tears,  
But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain.  
Thou only, Balder, wast for ever kind,  
To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say:

*Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears!  
One day the wandering Oder will return,  
Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search  
On some great road, or resting in an inn,  
Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree.*

So Balder said ; — but Oder, well I know,  
My truant Oder I shall see no more  
To the world's end ; and Balder now is gone,  
And I am left uncomforted in Heaven."

She spake ; and all the Goddesses bewail'd.  
Last from among the Heroes one came near,  
No God, but of the hero-troop the chief —  
Regner, who swept the northern sea with fleets,  
And ruled o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,  
Living ; but Ella captured him and slew ; —  
A king whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,  
Now time obscures it, and men's later deeds.  
He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and said : —

"Balder, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven  
Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage,  
Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone.  
And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear,  
After the feast is done, in Odin's hall ;  
But they harp ever on one string, and wake  
Remembrance in our soul of wars alone,  
Such as on earth we valiantly have waged,  
And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death.  
But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike  
Another note, and, like a bird in spring,  
Thy voice of joyance minded us, and youth,  
And wife, and children, and our ancient home.  
Yes, and I, too, remember'd then no more  
My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,  
Nor Ella's victory on the English coast —

But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle,  
And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend  
Her flock along the white Norwegian beach.  
Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy.  
Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead."

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd.  
But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,  
And soon had all that day been spent in wail;  
But then the Father of the ages said: —

"Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail!  
Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship;  
Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre."

But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they brought  
The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,  
Full the deck's breadth, and lofty; then the corpse  
Of Balder on the highest top they laid,  
With Nanna on his right, and on his left  
Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew.  
And they set jars of wine and oil to lean  
Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,  
Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine;  
And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,  
And slew the dogs who at his table fed,  
And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he loved,  
And placed them on the pyre, and Odin threw  
A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.  
The mast they fixt, and hoisted up the sails,  
Then they put fire to the wood; and Thor  
Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern  
To push the ship through the thick sand; — sparks flew  
From the deep trench she plough'd, so strong a God  
Furrow'd it; and the water gurgled in.  
And the ship floated on the waves, and rock'd.  
But in the hills a strong east-wind arose,

And came down moaning to the sea ; first squalls  
Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd  
The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire,  
And wreathed in smoke the ship stood out to sea.  
Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,  
And the pile crackled ; and between the logs  
Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and leapt,  
Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd  
The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast,  
And ate the shrivelling sails ; but still the ship  
Drove on, ablaze above her hull with fire.  
And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gazed.  
And while they gazed, the sun went lurid down  
Into smoke-wrapt sea, and night came on.  
Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm ;  
But through the dark they watch'd the burning ship  
Still carried o'er the distant waters on,  
Farther and farther, like an eye of fire.  
And long, in the far dark, blazed Balder's pile ;  
But fainter, as the stars rose high, it flared,  
The bodies were consumed, ash choked the pile.  
And as, in a decaying winter-fire,  
A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks —  
So with a shower of sparks the pile fell in,  
Reddening the sea around ; and all was dark.

But the Gods went by starlight up the shore  
To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall  
At table, and the funeral-feast began.  
All night they ate the boar Serimner's flesh,  
And from their horns, with silver rimm'd, drank mead,  
Silent, and waited for the sacred morn.

And morning over all the world was spread.  
Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods arose,  
And took their horses, and set forth to ride

O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain;  
Thor came on foot, the rest on horseback rode.  
And they found Minir sitting by his fount  
Of wisdom, which beneath the ash tree springs;  
And saw the Nornies watering the roots  
Of that world-shadowing tree with honey-dew.  
There came the Gods, and sate them down on stones;  
And thus the Father of the ages said:—

“Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Hermod brought.  
Accept them or reject them! both have grounds.  
Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,  
To leave for ever Balder in the grave,  
An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.  
But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail? —  
Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd;  
For dear-beloved was Balder while he lived  
In Heaven and earth, and who would grudge him tears?  
But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,  
These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud.  
Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way? —  
Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods?  
If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,  
Mounted on Sleipner, with the warrior Thor  
Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons,  
All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my train,  
Should make irruption into Hela's realm,  
And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,  
And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven?”

He spake, and his fierce sons applauded loud.  
But Freia, mother of the Gods, arose,  
Daughter and wife of Odin; thus she said: —

“Odin, thou whirlwind, what a threat is this!  
Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, even thine.

For of all powers the mightiest far art thou,  
Lord over men on earth, and Gods in Heaven;  
Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld  
One thing — to undo what thou thyself hast ruled.  
For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee.  
In the beginning, ere the Gods were born,  
Before the Heavens were builded, thou didst slay  
The giant Ymir, whom the abyss brought forth,  
Thou and thy brethren fierce, the sons of Bor,  
And cast his trunk to choke the abysmal void.  
But of his flesh and members thou didst build  
The earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven.  
And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns,  
Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest lights,  
Sun, moon, and stars, which thou hast hung in Heaven,  
Dividing clear the paths of night and day.  
And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard fort;  
Then me thou mad'st; of us the Gods were born.  
Last, walking by the sea, thou foundest spars  
Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the earth,  
Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail.  
And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,  
Save one, Bergelmer; — he on shipboard fled  
Thy deluge, and from him the giants sprang.  
But all that brood thou hast removed far off,  
And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell;  
But Hela into Niflheim thou threw'st,  
And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to rule,  
A queen, and empire over all the dead.  
That empire wilt thou now invade, light up  
Her darkness, from her grasp a subject tear? —  
Try it; but I, for one, will not applaud.  
Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight  
Me and my words, though thou be first in Heaven;



For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,  
Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung;  
And all that is to come I know, but lock  
In mine own breast, and have to none reveal'd.  
Come then! since Hela holds by right her prey,  
But offers terms for his release to Heaven,  
Accept the chance; thou canst no more obtain.  
Send through the world thy messengers; entreat  
All living and unliving things to weep  
For Balder; if thou haply thus may'st melt  
Hela, and win the loved one back to Heaven."

She spake, and on her face let fall her veil,  
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.  
Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word;  
Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods;  
"Go quickly forth through all the world, and pray  
All living and unliving things to weep  
Balder, if haply he may thus be won."

When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and took  
Their horses, and rode forth through all the world;  
North, south, east, west, they struck, and roam'd the world.  
Entreating all things to weep Balder's death.  
And all that lived, and all without life, wept.  
And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,  
At winter's end, before the spring begins,  
And a warm west-wind blows, and thaw sets in —  
After an hour a dripping sound is heard  
In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow  
Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes,  
And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down;  
And, in fields sloping to the south, dark plots  
Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,  
And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad —  
So through the world was heard a dripping noise

Of all things weeping to bring Balder back ;  
And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.

But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he took  
To show him spits and beaches of the sea  
Far off, where some unwarn'd might fail to weep —  
Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers know ;  
Not born in Heaven ; he was in Vanheim rear'd,  
With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods ;  
He knows each frith, and every rocky creek  
Fringed with dark pines, and sands where sea-fowl scream —  
They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept.  
And they rode home together, through the wood  
Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies  
Bordering the giants, where the trees are iron ;  
There in the wood before a cave they came,  
Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny hag,  
Toothless and old ; she gibes the passers by.  
Thok is she call'd, but now Lok wore her shape ;  
She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and said : —

“Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in Heaven  
That ye come pleasuring to Thok's iron wood ?  
Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites.  
Look, as in some boor's yard a sweet-breath'd cow,  
Whose manger is stuff'd full of good fresh hay,  
Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head  
To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet —  
So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven !”

She spake ; but Hermod answer'd her and said : —  
“Thok, not for gibes we come, we come for tears.  
Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,  
But will restore, if all things give him tears.  
Begrudge not thine ! to all was Balder dear.”

Then, with a louder laugh, the hag replied : —  
“Is Balder dead ? and do ye come for tears ?

Thok with dry eyes will weep o'er Balder's pyre.  
Weep him all other things, if weep they will —  
I weep him not ! let Hela keep her prey."

She spake, and to the cavern's depth she fled,  
Mocking ; and Hermod knew their toil was vain.  
And as seafaring men, who long have wrought  
In the great deep for gain, at last come home,  
And towards evening see the headlands rise  
Of their dear country, and can plain descry  
A fire of wither'd furze which boys have lit  
Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds  
Out of a till'd field inland ; — then the wind  
Catches them, and drives out again to sea ;  
And they go long days tossing up and down  
Over the gray sea-ridges, and the glimpse  
Of port they had makes bitterer far their toil —  
So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their joy.

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod spake : —  
"It is the accuser Lok, who flouts us all !  
Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news ;  
I must again below, to Hela's realm."

He spoke ; and Niord set forth back to Heaven.  
But northward Hermod rode, the way below,  
The way he knew ; and traversed Giall's stream,  
And down to Ocean groped, and cross'd the ice,  
And came beneath the wall, and found the grate  
Still lifted ; well was his return foreknown.  
And once more Hermod saw around him spread  
The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell.  
But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound  
Of Niflheim, he saw one ghost come near,  
Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid —  
Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew.  
And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost,

And call'd him by his name, and sternly said: —

“Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and eyes!  
Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulph  
Of the deep inner gloom, but flittest here,  
In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell,  
Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne?  
Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice,  
Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay.”

He spoke; but Hoder answer'd him, and said: —  
“Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue  
The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave?  
For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom,  
Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,  
Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven;  
And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by?  
No less than Balder have I lost the light  
Of Heaven, and communion with my kin;  
I too had once a wife, and once a child,  
And substance, and a golden house in Heaven —  
But all I left of my own act, and fled  
Below, and dost thou hate me even here?  
Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,  
Though he has cause, have any cause; but he,  
When that with downcast looks I hither came,  
Stretch'd forth his hand, and with benignant voice,  
*Welcome, he said, if there be welcome here,  
Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me!*  
And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force  
My hated converse on thee, came I up  
From the deep gloom, where I will now return;  
But earnestly I long'd to hover near,  
Not too far off, when that thou camest by;  
To feel the presence of a brother God,  
And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,

For the last time — for here thou com'st no more."

He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner gloom.  
But Hermod stay'd him with mild words, and said: —

"Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder blind!  
Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind  
Was Lok's; the unwitting hand alone was thine.  
But Gods are like the sons of men in this —  
When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause.  
Howbeit stay, and be appeased! and tell:  
Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,  
Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead?"

And the blind Hoder answer'd him and spake: —  
"His place of state remains by Hela's side,  
But empty; for his wife, for Nanna came  
Lately below, and join'd him; and the pair  
Frequent the still recesses of the realm  
Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd.  
But they too, doubtless, will have breathed the balm,  
Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,  
And have drawn upward to this verge of Hell."

He spake; and, as he ceased, a puff of wind  
Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside  
Round where they stood, and they beheld two forms  
Make toward them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.  
And Hermod straight perceived them, who they were  
Balder and Nanna; and to Balder said: —

"Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a snare!  
Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey.  
No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge  
In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy  
The love all bear toward thee, nor train up  
Forset, thy son, to be beloved like thee.  
Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age.  
Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail!"

He spake; and Balder answer'd him, and said: —  
“Hail and farewell! for here thou com'st no more.  
Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt'st  
In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,  
As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn.  
For Nanna hath rejoin'd me, who, of old,  
In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side;  
And still the acceptance follows me, which crown'd  
My former life, and cheers me even here.  
The iron frown of Hela is relax'd  
When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead  
Love me, and gladly bring for my award  
Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates —  
Shadows of hates, but they distress them still.”

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply: —  
“Thou hast then all the solace death allows,  
Esteem and function; and so far is well.  
Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,  
Rusting forever; and the years roll on,  
The generations pass, the ages grow,  
And bring us nearer to the final day  
When from the south shall march the fiery band  
And cross the bridge of Heaven, with Lok for guide,  
And Fenris at his heel with broken chain;  
While from the east the giant Rymer steers  
His ship, and the great serpent makes to land;  
And all are marshall'd in one flaming square  
Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven,  
I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then.”

He spake; but Balder answer'd him, and said: —  
“Mourn not for me! Mourn, Hermod, for the Gods;  
Mourn for the men on earth, the Gods in Heaven,  
Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day!  
The day will come, when fall shall Asgard's towers,

And Odin, and his sons, the seed of Heaven ;  
But what were I, to save them in that hour ?  
If strength might save them, could not Odin save,  
My father, and his pride, the warrior Thor,  
Vidar the silent, the impetuous Tyr ?  
I, what were I, when these can nought avail ?  
Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,  
And the two hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven  
The golden-crested cock shall sound alarm,  
And his black brother-bird from hence reply,  
And bucklers clash, and spears begin to pour —  
Longing will stir within my breast, though vain.  
But not to me so grievous, as, I know,  
To other Gods it were, is my enforced  
Absence from fields where I could nothing aid ;  
For I am long since weary of your storm  
Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life  
Something too much of war and broils, which make  
Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.  
Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail ;  
Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for calm.  
Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,  
Unarm'd, inglorious ; I attend the course  
Of ages, and my late return to light,  
In times less alien to a spirit mild,  
In new-recover'd seats, the happier day."

He spake ; and the fleet Hermod thus replied : —  
"Brother, what seats are these, what happier day ?  
Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone."

And the ray-crowned Balder answer'd him : —  
"Far to the south, beyond the blue, there spreads  
Another Heaven, the boundless — no one yet  
Hath reach'd it ; there hereafter shall arise  
The second Asgard, with another name.



Thither, when o'er this present earth and Heavens  
The tempest of the latter days hath swept,  
And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,  
Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair ;  
Hoder and I shall join them from the grave.  
There re-assembling we shall see emerge  
From the bright Ocean at our feet an earth  
More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits  
Self-springing, and a seed of man preserved,  
Who then shall live in peace, as now in war.  
But we in Heaven shall find again with joy  
The ruin'd palaces of Odin, seats  
Familiar, halls where we have supp'd of old ;  
Re-enter them with wonder, never fill  
Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears.  
And we shall tread once more the well-known plain  
Of Ida, and among the grass shall find  
The golden dice wherewith we play'd of yore ;  
And that will bring to mind the former life  
And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse  
Of Odin, the delights of other days.  
O Hermod, pray that thou may'st join us then !  
Such for the future is my hope ; meanwhile,  
I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure  
Death, and the gloom which round me even now  
Thickens, and to its inner gulph recalls.  
Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd !''

He spoke, and waved farewell, and gave his hand  
To Nanna ; and she gave their brother blind  
Her hand, in turn, for guidance ; and the three  
Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon  
Faded from sight into the interior gloom.  
But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse,  
Mute, gazing after them in tears ; and fain,

Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,  
Though they to death were bound, and he to Heaven,  
Then; but a power he could not break withheld.  
And as a stork, which idle boys have trapp'd,  
And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees  
Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head  
To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun; —  
He strains to join their flight, and from his shed  
Follows them with a long complaining cry  
So Hermod gazed, and yearn'd to join his kin.

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven.

## KEATS' POEMS.

### ODE ON A GRECIAN URN.

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme.  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempé or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal — yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade: though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love, more happy, happy love!

For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
 For ever panting, and for ever young;  
 All breathing human passion far above,  
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
 What little town by river or sea shore,  
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
 When thou art desolate can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
 When old age shall this generation waste,  
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all  
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

#### ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold  
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
 Round many western islands have I been  
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.

Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne :  
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :

— Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken ;  
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific — and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

#### THE HUMAN SEASONS.

FOUR Seasons fill the measure of the year ;  
There are four seasons in the mind of man :  
He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear  
Takes in all beauty with an easy span :  
He has his Summer, when luxuriously  
Spring's honey'd cud of youthful thought he loves  
To ruminate, and by such dreaming high  
Is nearest unto heaven : quiet coves  
His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings  
He furleth close : contented so to look  
On mists in idleness — to let fair things  
Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.  
He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,  
Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

#### THE MERMAID TAVERN.

SOULS of Poets dead and gone,  
What Elysium have ye known,  
Happy field or mossy cavern,  
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

Have ye tippled drink more fine  
 Than mine host's Canary wine?  
 Or are fruits of Paradise  
 Sweeter than those dainty pies  
 Of venison? O generous food!  
 Drest as though bold Robin Hood  
 Would, with his Maid Marian,  
 Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day  
 Mine host's sign-board flew away  
 Nobody knew whither, till  
 An astrologer's old quill  
 To a sheepskin gave the story,  
 Said he saw you in your glory,  
 Underneath a new-old sign  
 Sipping beverage divine,  
 And pledging with contented smack  
 The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,  
 What Elysium have ye known,  
 Happy field or mossy cavern,  
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

### ODE ON THE POETS.

BARDS of Passion and of Mirth  
 Ye have left your souls on earth!  
 Have ye souls in heaven too,  
 Double-lived in regions new?

— Yes, and those of heaven commune  
 With the spheres of sun and moon;  
 With the noise of fountains wond'rous  
 And the parle of voices thund'rous;

With the whisper of heaven's trees  
And one another, in soft ease  
Seated on Elysian lawns  
Browsed by none but Dian's fawns ;  
Underneath large blue-bells tented,  
Where the daisies are rose-scented,  
And the rose herself has got  
Perfume which on earth is not ;  
Where the nightingale doth sing  
Not a senseless, trancéd thing,  
But divine melodious truth ;  
Philosophic numbers smooth ;  
Tales and golden histories  
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then  
On the earth ye live again ;  
And the souls ye left behind you  
Teach us, here, the way to find you,  
Where your other souls are joying,  
Never slumber'd, never cloying.  
Here, your earth-born souls still speak  
To mortals, of their little week ;  
Of their sorrows and delights ;  
Of their passions and their spites ;  
Of their glory and their shame ;  
What doth strengthen and what maim : —  
Thus ye teach us, every day,  
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth  
Ye have left your souls on earth !  
Ye have souls in heaven too,  
Double-lived in regions new !

## WORDSWORTH'S POEMS.

### SONNETS.

A POET! — He hath put his heart to school,  
Nor dares to move unpropped upon the staff  
Which Art hath lodged within his hand; must laugh  
By precept only, and shed tears by rule.  
Thy Art be Nature; the live current quaff,  
And let the groveller sip his stagnant pool,  
In fear that else, when Critics grave and cool  
Have killed him, Scorn should write his epitaph.  
How does the Meadow-flower its bloom unfold?  
Because the lovely little flower is free  
Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold;  
And so the grandeur of the Forest-tree  
Comes not by casting in a formal mould,  
But from its *own* divine vitality.

THE world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not. — Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,



Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathéd horn.

NUNS fret not at their convent's narrow room ;  
And hermits are contented with their cells ;  
And students with their pensive citadels ;  
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,  
Sit blithe and happy ; bees that soar for bloom,  
High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,  
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells :  
In truth the prison, unto which we doom  
Ourselves, no prison is : and hence for me,  
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound  
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground ;  
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)  
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,  
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

### LONDON.

MILTON ! thou should'st be living at this hour :  
England hath need of thee : she is a fen  
Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,  
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
Have forfeited their ancient English dower  
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;  
Oh ! raise us up, return to us again ;  
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart :  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea :  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
So didst thou travel on life's common way,  
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

## COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

EARTH has not anything to show more fair :  
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
 A sight so touching in its majesty :  
 This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
 The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,  
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky ;  
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
 Never did sun more beautifully steep  
 In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill ;  
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !  
 The river glideth at his own sweet will ;  
 Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;  
 And all that mighty heart is lying still !

## TO TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE.

TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy man of men !  
 Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough  
 Within thy hearing, or thy head be now  
 Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den ;  
 O miserable Chieftain ! where and when  
 Wilt thou find patience ? Yet die not ; do thou  
 Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow :  
 Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,  
 Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind  
 Powers that will work for thee, — air, earth, and skies ;  
 There's not a breathing of the common wind  
 That will forget thee ; thou hast great allies ;  
 Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
 And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

WE ARE SEVEN.

— A SIMPLE Child,  
That lightly draws its breath,  
And feels its life in every limb,  
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage Girl:  
She was eight years old, she said;  
Her hair was thick with many a curl  
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,  
And she was wildly clad:  
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;  
— Her beauty made me glad.

“Sisters and brothers, little Maid,  
How many may you be?”  
“How many? Seven in all,” she said,  
And wondering looked at me.

“And where are they? I pray you tell.”  
She answered, “Seven are we;  
And two of us at Conway dwell,  
And two are gone to sea.

“Two of us in the church-yard lie,  
My sister and my brother;  
And, in the church-yard cottage, I  
Dwell near them with my mother.”

“You say that two at Conway dwell,  
And two are gone to sea,  
Yet ye are seven! I pray you tell,  
Sweet Maid, how this may be.”

Then did the little maid reply,  
"Seven boys and girls are we;  
Two of us in the church-yard lie,  
Beneath the church-yard tree."

"You run about, my little Maid,  
Your limbs they are alive;  
If two are in the church-yard laid,  
Then ye are only five."

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"  
The little maid replied,  
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,  
And they are side by side.

"My stockings there I often knit,  
My kerchief there I hem;  
And there upon the ground I sit,  
And sing a song to them.

"And often after sunset, Sir,  
When it is light and fair,  
I take my little porringer,  
And eat my supper there.

"The first that died was sister Jane;  
In bed she moaning lay,  
Till God released her of her pain:  
And then she went away.

"So in the church-yard she was laid;  
And, when the grass was dry,  
Together round her grave we played,  
My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow,  
And I could run and slide,

My brother John was forced to go,  
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you, then," said I,  
"If they two are in heaven?"  
Quick was the little Maid's reply,  
"O master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead!  
Their spirits are in heaven!"  
'Twas throwing words away; for still  
The little Maid would have her will,  
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

### THE TABLES TURNED.

UP! up! my Friend, and quit your books;  
Or surely you'll grow double:  
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;  
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,  
A freshening lustre mellow  
Through all the long green fields has spread,  
His fine sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:  
Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
How sweet his music! on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
He, too, is no mean preacher:  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,  
Our minds and hearts to bless —  
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;  
Our meddling intellect  
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: —  
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;  
Close up those barren leaves;  
Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
That watches and receives.

### CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WARRIOR.

Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he  
That every man in arms should wish to be?  
— It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought  
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought  
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:  
Whose high endeavours are an inward light  
That makes the path before him always bright:  
Who, with a natural instinct to discern  
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn;  
Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,  
But makes his moral being his prime care;  
Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,  
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!  
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;

In face of these doth exercise a power  
Which is our human nature's highest dower ;  
Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves  
Of their bad influence, and their good receives :  
By objects, which might force the soul to abate  
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate ;  
Is placable — because occasions rise  
So often that demand such sacrifice ;  
More skilful in self-knowledge, even more pure,  
As tempted more ; more able to endure,  
As more exposed to suffering and distress ;  
Thence, also, more alive to tenderness.  
— 'Tis he whose law is reason ; who depends  
Upon that law as on the best of friends ;  
Whence, in a state where men are tempted still  
To evil for a guard against worse ill,  
And what in quality or act is best  
Doth seldom on a right foundation rest,  
He labours good on good to fix, and owes  
To virtue every triumph that he knows :  
— Who, if he rise to station of command,  
Rises by open means ; and there will stand  
On honourable terms, or else retire,  
And in himself possess his own desire ;  
Who comprehends his trust, and to the same  
Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim ;  
And therefore does not stoop, nor lie in wait  
For wealth, or honours, or for worldly state ;  
Whom they must follow ; on whose head must fall,  
Like showers of manna, if they come at all :  
Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,  
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,  
A constant influence, a peculiar grace ;  
But who, if he be called upon to face

Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined  
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,  
Is happy as a Lover; and attired  
With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired;  
And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law  
In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw;  
Or if an unexpected call succeed,  
Come when it will, is equal to the need:  
— He who, though thus endued as with a sense  
And faculty for storm and turbulence,  
Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans  
To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;  
Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,  
Are at his heart; and such fidelity  
It is his darling passion to approve;  
More brave for this, that he hath much to love: —  
'Tis, finally, the Man, who, lifted high,  
Conspicuous object in a Nation's eye,  
Or left unthought-of in obscurity, —  
Who, with a toward or untoward lot,  
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not —  
Plays, in the many games of life, that one  
Where what he most doth value must be won:  
Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,  
Nor thought of tender happiness betray;  
Who, not content that former worth stand fast,  
Looks forward, persevering to the last,  
From well to better, daily self-surpass:  
Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth  
For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,  
Or he must fall, to sleep without his fame,  
And leave a dead unprofitable name —  
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;  
And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws



His breath in confidence of heaven's applause:  
This is the happy Warrior; this is He  
That every Man in arms should wish to be.

## TO A SKY-LARK.

Up with me! up with me into the clouds!  
For thy song, Lark, is strong;  
Up with me, up with me into the clouds!  
Singing, singing,  
With clouds and sky about thee ringing,  
Lift me, guide me till I find  
That spot which seems so to thy mind!  
I have walked through wildernesses dreary,  
And to-day my heart is weary;  
Had I now the wings of a Faery,  
Up to thee would I fly.  
There is madness about thee, and joy divine  
In that song of thine;  
Lift me, guide me high and high  
To thy banqueting-place in the sky.

Joyous as morning,  
Thou art laughing and scorning;  
Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest,  
And, though little troubled with sloth,  
Drunken Lark! thou would'st be loth  
To be such a traveller as I.  
Happy, happy Liver,  
With a soul as strong as a mountain river  
Pouring out praise to the Almighty Giver,  
Joy and jollity be with us both!

Alas! my journey, rugged and uneven,  
Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind;

But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,  
 As full of gladness and as free of heaven,  
 I, with my fate contented, will plod on,  
 And hope for higher raptures, when life's day is done.

EXTRACT FROM ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF  
 IMMORTALITY.

OUR birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :  
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
     Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
     And cometh from afar :  
     Not in entire forgetfulness,  
     And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
     From God, who is our home :  
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy !  
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
     Upon the growing Boy, &  
 But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
     He sees it in his joy ;  
     The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
     Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
     And by the vision splendid  
     Is on his way attended ;  
 At length the Man perceives it die away,  
 And fade into the light of common day.

TO A BUTTERFLY.

I've watched you now a full half-hour,  
 Self-poised upon that yellow flower ;  
 And, little Butterfly ! indeed  
 I know not if you sleep or feed.

How motionless! — not frozen seas  
More motionless! and then  
What joy awaits you, when the breeze  
Hath found you out among the trees,  
And calls you forth again!

This plot of orchard-ground is ours;  
My trees they are, my Sister's flowers;  
Here rest your wings when they are weary;  
Here lodge as in a sanctuary!  
Come often to us, fear no wrong;  
Sit near us on the bough!  
We'll talk of sunshine and of song,  
And summer days, when we were young;  
Sweet childish days, that were as long  
As twenty days are now.

### THE DAFFODILS;

OR, I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD.

I WANDERED lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed — and gazed — but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

#### TO THE DAISY.

With little here to do or see  
Of things that in the great world be,  
Daisy! again I talk to thee,  
For thou art worthy,  
Thou unassuming Common-place  
Of Nature, with that homely face,  
And yet with something of a grace,  
Which Love makes for thee!

Oft on the dappled turf at ease  
I sit, and play with similes,  
Loose types of things through all degrees,  
Thoughts of thy raising:  
And many a fond and idle name  
I give to thee, for praise or blame,  
As is the humour of the game,  
While I am gazing.

A nun demure of lowly port;  
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court,  
In thy simplicity the sport  
    Of all temptations;  
A queen in crown of rubies drest;  
A starveling in a scanty vest;  
Are all, as seems to suit thee best,  
Thy appellations.

A little Cyclops, with one eye  
Staring to threaten and defy,  
That thought comes next — and instantly  
    The freak is over,  
The shape will vanish — and behold  
A silver shield with boss of gold,  
That spreads itself, some faery bold  
    In fight to cover!

I see thee glittering from afar —  
And then thou art a pretty star;  
Not quite so fair as many are  
    In heaven above thee!  
Yet like a star, with glittering crest,  
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest; —  
May peace come never to his nest,  
    Who shall reprove thee!

Bright *Flower!* for by that name at last,  
When all my reveries are past,  
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,  
    Sweet silent creature!  
That breath'st with me in sun and air,  
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair  
My heart with gladness, and a share  
    Of thy meek nature!



## NOTES.

### THE STUDY OF POETRY.

Read the following poems of Burns in order to understand more clearly Arnold's estimate of the poet: —

The Holy Fair.	Winter, a Dirge.
Hallowe'en.	For a' That and a' That.
Cotter's Saturday Night.	Address to the Unco' Good.
(Compare the stanzas written in English with those in the Scotch dialect.)	Twa Dogs.
Ane Fond Kiss.	John Anderson.
Tam o' Shanter.	Highland Mary.
The Jolly Beggars.	To Mary in Heaven.
Whistle owre the lave o't.	The Bonnie Wee Thing.
	Bruce's Address.
	Auld Lang Syne.

PAGE 1, 1-3. See the chapter on the Prospects of Poetry in Court-hope's *The Liberal Movement in English Literature*.

PAGE 1, 3-6. Compare Macaulay's *Essay on Byron*: "Since its first great masterpieces were produced, everything that is changeable in this world has been changed. Civilization has been gained, lost, gained again. Religion, and languages, and forms of government, and usages of private life, and modes of thinking, all have undergone a succession of revolutions. Everything has passed away but the great features of nature, and the heart of man, and the miracles of that art of which it is the office to reflect back the heart of man and the features of nature."

PAGE 1, 6-9. "Religion (says Arnold) is morality touched with emotion. Arnold values Christ's teaching because he says that it discloses the true secret of *life*."

PAGE 2, 5-7. Why was so much poetry written (and read) during the late War? See article on "The Rage for Poetry," *Literary Digest*, December 2, 1922.

"Imagine the changes which you must make in the language of the Psalmist to empty it of what Mr. Arnold calls belief in 'the supposed fact': 'Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God!' . . .

"Take the divine illusion, as Mr. Arnold calls it, out of this, and how much of 'the emotion' requisite for religion would remain?" — *Swinburne*.

PAGE 2, 5-7. Compare Macaulay's *Essay on Byron*: "Thus the objects of the imitation of poetry are the whole external and the whole internal universe, the face of nature, the vicissitudes of fortune, man as he is in himself, man as he appears in society, all things which really exist, all things of which we can form an image in our minds by combining together parts of things which really exist."

PAGE 2, 7-11. "Science and philosophy feel their way, poetry opens instantly on the truth. . . . Science is slow, it searches; poetry is swift, it sees. . . . Poetry leaps to the ultimate, essential beauty, the grand unity. . . . Science and philosophy may hesitate, may grope, may despair, poetry holds to the old vision of joy." — *Cheney* in "*The Golden Guess*."

PAGE 2, 30. Sainte-Beuve. "Most eminent of French critics, and founder of a new school of criticism, of which Matthew Arnold is the English representative." "In introducing the methods of Sainte-Beuve into England, Arnold transferred the interest in criticism from the books to the man." See Burroughs' comparison of Sainte-Beuve and Arnold in *Indoor Studies*.

PAGE 2, 31. Charlatan [shárlatan]: a quack; an impostor.

PAGE 3, 3 ff. These lines show a favorite device of the author. He selects a felicitous phrase expressive of a certain view, and rings the changes on that phrase until every reader sees clearly. For notable example of the same device see p. 4, 6 ff.; p. 13, 17 ff.; p. 18, 3 ff.; p. 22, 19 ff.; p. 31, 1-8.

PAGE 3, 17-18. "No poetry has ever more clearly carried out and justified this definition than that of Byron." — *Mrs. Oliphant*.

"[Arnold] The first critic of our time, . . . the critic foursquare, — fitted to see the complex mystery called life as nearly as it is as lies to-day in man's ability." — *Cheney*.

Compare with other definitions of Poetry:

"A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." — *Shelley*.

See "Wordsworth." — *Matthew Arnold*.

"Imitation by words." — *Aristotle*.



"The proper business of poetry seems to be a representation of the eternal, the ever important and universally beautiful." — *Hegel*.

"The thing feigned, the feigning, and the feigner: so the poem, the poesy, and the poet." — *Ben Jonson*.

"A dictionary of the soul." — *Herder*.

"Historian and poet differ by this — that the one relates what *has been*, the other what *might be*." — *Aristotle*.

"The suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions." — *Ruskin*.

Which of the definitions above most closely approaches Arnold's definition?

PAGE 3, 17. "His [Arnold's] criticism of books was a criticism of life, and here his work touched the deepest problems of his time, problems social and problems theological." — *Jacobs*.

PAGE 4, 22 ff. It has been well said that a literary production should be a generation old before we finally pronounce upon its merits.

How much of Byron's fame was due to the *man*?

PAGE 5, 8. Pellison. French author, 1624-1693.

PAGE 5, 13, 14. Get from the context a "working knowledge" of these proper names.

PAGE 5, 9-10. — "barren and cringing politeness."

PAGE 6, 5. See *Select Essays of Sainte-Beuve*, translated by Butler.

PAGE 6, 6-7. Note definition of "classic." Can you offer a better definition? With this definition in mind, name some classics.

PAGE 6, 29 ff. Compare *Childe Harold*, Canto iv., Stanzas lxxv.-lxxvii.

PAGE 8, 8. See Bulfinch's *Legends of Charlemagne*; *Story of Roland* — Baldwin; *Song of Roland* — O'Hagan; ten Brink's *Early English Literature*. (To Wiclif.)

PAGE 8, 16. For a good account of the Bodleian Library and of Oxford, see Mathew's *Hours with Men and Books*.

PAGE 9, 24-25. Discuss this statement.

PAGE 10, 8. Translations of Dante: Cary's (metrical); Norton's (prose); Moore's (annotated); Longfellow's; Plumptre's (metrical).

Essays on Dante: Mrs. Oliphant in *Makers of Florence*; Carlyle's *Hero as a Poet*; Lowell's *My Study Windows*.

Mrs. Ward's *Life of Dante*; Miss Rossetti's *Shadow of Dante*.

PAGE 11, 4 ff. *Paradise Lost*, i. 599 ff.

PAGE 11, 9-10. *Paradise Lost*, i. 108-109.

PAGE 11, 13-14. *Paradise Lost*, iv. 271-272.

PAGE 12, 17. Judge from the context the meaning of these Greek words.

PAGE 12, 22 ff. "Aristotle as unequivocally declares (and Milton proves) that in poetry, that is, in epic and tragedy, the principal thing is the fable or plot." — *A. S. Cook*.

PAGE 13, 32 ff. See *Primer of English Literature*, by Stopford Brooke, pp. 30-33.

PAGE 15, 5 ff. See the same, pp. 42-49.

PAGE 15, 8-10. "Chaucer was in the main a French or Italian poet, lined thoroughly and warmed throughout with the substance of an English humorist." — *Swinburne*.

PAGE 16, 23-24. Could the structure of this sentence be improved?

PAGE 18, 27 ff. "Dante represents, at its best and highest, the upper class of the dark ages not less than he represents their Italy; Chaucer represents their middle class at its best and wisest, not less than he represents their England; Villon represents their lower class at its worst and its best alike, even more than he represents their France. . . . Dante and Chaucer are wholly and solely poets of the past or present — singers indeed for all time, but only singers of their own; Villon, in an equivocal and unconscious fashion, was a singer also of the future. He was the first modern and the last mediæval poet. . . . He is of us, in a sense in which it cannot be said that either Chaucer or Dante is of us, or even could have been." — *Swinburne*.

PAGE 19, 2. Villon: from the context, find who Villon was and what he did.

PAGE 19, 18 ff. See Brooke's *Primer*, pp. 71-124. (Excellent for a study of the poetry of the Elizabethan Era and the poetry of the period from Elizabeth to the Restoration.)

PAGE 19, 20. Read the last sentences of Arnold's *Essay on Milton*, for a fine criticism on Milton's style.

PAGE 20, 6 ff. See Brooke's *Primer*, pp. 125-130; read Macaulay's *Essay on Moore's Byron* for criticism of "correctness" in poetry; read Wordsworth's Sonnet, "A Poet! — He hath put his heart to school"; see also Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, chap. 1.

PAGE 21, 9 ff. For a fine example of Arnold's power as a prose writer see the exquisite apostrophe to Oxford, beginning: "Beautiful City! so venerable," in the Preface to his *Critical Essays*, First Series.

PAGE 21, 12. Gades, the ancient Phœnician colony which stood

on the site of the modern Cadiz, Spain; Aurora, island in South Pacific; Ganges, river in India.

PAGE 21, 30. Restoration: the Stuart line was again put upon the English throne, in the person of Charles II.

PAGE 21, 34. Puritan age, 1625-1660.

PAGE 22, 12-16. Compare Bascom's *Philosophy of English Literature*: "In proportion as the excellence of the form transcends the value of the matter, does the literary work gain perpetuity." Discuss this statement.

PAGE 22, 26-27. *Hind and Panther* — written to show sympathy for the Church of Rome in her reverses.

PAGE 22, 31-32. *Imitations of Horace*, Second Satire of the Second Book.

PAGE 23, 21. "Their [Gray's and Collins'] best poems are exquisite examples of English work wrought in the spirit of the imaginative scholar and the moralist. The affectation of the age touches them now and again, but their manner, their way of blending together natural feeling and natural scenery, their studious care in the choice of words, are worthy of special study." — *Brooke*.

PAGE 23, 25 ff. For Arnold's views on Hellenism and Hebraism see his *Culture and Anarchy*. See also Burroughs' *Indoor Studies* and Cheney's *Golden Guess*.

PAGE 23, 34. What is the test of the classic?

PAGE 24, 3 ff. Compare Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*: "It was a curious phenomenon, in the withered, unbelieving, second-hand eighteenth century, that of a hero starting up, among the artificial pasteboard figures and productions, in the guise of a Robert Burns. . . . You would think it strange if I called Burns the most gifted British soul we had in all that century of his; and yet I believe the day is coming when there will be little danger in saying so."

"No bolder and yet surer piece of criticism was probably ever written than that which virtually puts not only 'Tam o'Shanter,' but 'The Jolly Beggars,' above 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' and 'A Man's a Man for a' that,' — and yet the criticism is sound. In the two latter pieces, Burns was expressing what he *wished* to feel, but on the whole did not succeed in feeling." — *Hutton*.

Note the confidence with which Arnold sets aside popular judgment regarding Burns's poems.

PAGE 24, 10 ff. "Elegy on Death of Lord President Dundas."

PAGE 25, 16 ff. "The Holy Fair."

PAGE 25, 16 ff. *leeze*, it is pleasing; *leeze me on*, I love; *lair*, lore; *pangs*, cramps; *penny wheep*, small beer; *kittle*, tickle.

PAGE 26, 4. *mauna*, must not.

PAGE 26, 12. *lowe*, flame.

PAGE 26, 12 ff. "Epistle to a Young Friend."

PAGE 26, 21 ff. "Address to the Unco' Good."

PAGE 26, 31 ff. "On Dr. Blacklock."

PAGE 27, 12. Compare Lewes' *Principles of Success in Literature*, chapter on Sincerity.

PAGE 27, 28 ff. "Winter, a Dirge."

PAGE 28, 12. *lave*, what is left.

PAGE 28, 17 ff. Compare Bascom's *Philosophy of English Literature*: "In his own art, poetry, Chaucer was equally progressive, though he reaches his highest results by a growth rather than by a leap. . . . This early acceptance of real, common life as his subject shows the humanity of Chaucer, and the penetrative, commanding character of his mind."

PAGE 28, 35. Shakespeare. See *Julius Cæsar*, iv. 3; *Coriolanus*, v. 3; *Richard III.*, i. 2; *Henry IV.*, i. 2; *Macbeth*, iii. 4 and ii. 2; *Merchant of Venice*, iv. 1; *Othello*, iii. 3.

Aristophanes. Greek writer of comedy. "He introduces us to the everyday life of the least admirable classes of Athenian society. Four of his most noted works are the *Clouds*, the *Knights*, the *Birds*, and the *Wasps*. In the *Clouds*, he especially ridicules the Sophists; the aim of the *Knights* was the punishment and ruin of Cleon, one of the most conceited and insolent of the demagogues of Athens; the play of the *Birds* is 'the everlasting allegory of foolish sham and flimsy ambition'; in the *Wasps*, the poet satirizes the proceedings in the Athenian law-courts." *Myers' Ancient History*.

See *Chorus* in the *Birds* — Frere's translation.

PAGE 29, 11. Cf. this Greek word with the Greek on p. 12, 17.

PAGE 29, 18 ff. *paidel't*, paddle it; *burn*, rivulet, brook.

PAGE 29, 24 ff. Compare: "Shelley, on the other hand, disdains to leave the empyrean. Thence if he hurl a missile, it shall be the bolt of Jove, which dazzles while it smites. To his glance the farthest horizons are simultaneously disclosed. Accordingly, he recognizes the identity of poetry with invention; with every species of fine art; with the prescience of great law-givers; with an intuitional philosophy; with vision which, in the poverty of language, we call prophetic, but which is really timeless, affirmatory of an eternal Now." — Cook in *Introduction to Shelley's "Defense of Poetry."*

PAGE 30, 3. *minnie*, mother; *deave*, deafen.

"Arnold always asked himself so pointedly what it was that a poet meant to convey, and whether he had really succeeded in conveying it, that his method almost debarred him from answering the very difficult question whether Shelley's evanescent lights and shadows and essences and potencies of melody did or did not constitute a genuine new creation at all. The very qualities which made him a most sure critic of poets who, to use his own phrase, attempted the highest criticism of life, made him an uncertain critic of poets who attempted something altogether different, — the composition of a fantasia of which the only test was its delightfulness to the ear that heard it. Matthew Arnold's mind was essentially positive. He knew what was false and true to life, and hardly ever failed to point out where the truth was, where the falsetto note came in." — *Hutton*.

Read Stopford Brooke's *Some Thoughts on Shelley* [Macmillan's Magazine, Vol. 42] as a supplement to Arnold's remarks.

"Yet the best thing that I or any one can say to you under these conditions is that a breath of true poetry is worth a breeze of comment; that one must in the end make his own acquaintance with its examples and form his judgment of them. . . . The poet's verse is more than all the learned scholia upon it. . . . A singer may fail in this or that, but when he dies the charm of his distinctive voice is gone forever." — *Stedman*.

"His [Arnold's] intellectual habit is mainly critical, and his reviews of society, literature, and certain contested topics of nineteenth-century belief are all marked by self-possession, urbanity, and the scrutiny of a trained and variously informed mind, which is restrained from hardness by the gift of the poetic and sympathetic feeling. Possibly his attitude is too scrupulously correct, sometimes it may seem over severe and unbending in matters of taste. We may occasionally chafe at a certain superiority of tone which Sydney Smith remarked in his bearing while a young man, and certainly he entertains opinions which many cannot accept. . . . But Arnold is the master of so rare a discrimination, such tact in selection, such certainty of touch in his own best field, such earnestness and strength despite his studied calm and the humor that plays over his pages, that we can scarcely overrate the service he has rendered to many in search of a conscientiously thoughtful intelligence, and a more refined and observant taste." — *McLaughlin*.

"Matthew Arnold is the recognized leader of a more scientific method than any that had preceded him in English criticism." — *McMahan*. What evidences of it in this essay?

Discuss any statement to which you take exception.

Observe the peculiarities of Arnold's literary manner.

What are the main topics treated of in the essay?

Read the following poems by Arnold, as exemplifying the principles laid down in the essay: —

\* The Forsaken Merman.

Resignation.

Thyrsis.

The Scholar Gipsy.

\* Dover Beach.

\* Balder Dead.

Sohrab and Rustum.

Westminster Abbey.

Tristram and Iseult.

\* Rugby Chapel.

"Though few, very few, critics have approached Arnold's understanding of poetry, his mastery of it from the finest point of technique up to the utmost reach of the power of the art, after all, the distinctive thing to be said of him is that he first proclaimed from day to day and from year to year the evangel of song. . . . He makes this a text to ring life long in the ears of an indifferent world: *You must not die till you have learned the poet's song.*" — *Cheney*.

\* These poems are to be found in this volume.

## INTRODUCTORY.

### THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH AND KEATS.

“The second creative period, the first thirty years of the present century, finds but one rival era in our literature. In this, as in that, revolutionary forces were at work, and the minds of men were awakened by various and powerful causes. As then, though foreign influences were active, native, national tendencies were pre-eminent. England, in the first instance, stood proudly on the defensive, the champion of Protestantism; and now, at least as she deemed it, of national constitutional development. No continental wars have been to England more significant than the struggles with Philip II. and Napoleon I. In each instance, she awaited a great invasion; and in each the conflict of arms was united with one of opinions.

“This second period was equally fruitful with the first, and more varied in its productions. It does not, indeed, reach quite the elevation of the Elizabethan era; it lies under the shadow of one or two of the great men of the earlier age; but, this admitted, it shows a more diversified, vigorous, and pervasive literary activity than even that first outburst of life. In it, as in every great literary period, poetry was clearly pre-eminent, and this, notwithstanding the fact that prose, in an unbroken and enlarged volume, came down from the previous time. Inquisitive, laborious, artistic prose multiplied in all directions, and added to its previous forms its most careful essays and best novels. Criticism, especially in the review, the magazine, the journal, began that prodigious productiveness which has at length filled every portion of our atmosphere with its floating spores, springing up as moss and lichens on every stalwart trunk; or as the literary must and mildew of the time on every decaying thing.

“Notwithstanding this unchecked power of prose, working for science or art, for use or pleasure, as it was able, poetry was the distinguishing feature of the time, and this under its best forms. Narrative, dramatic, lyric poetry prevailed, and when the didactic



element was present, it took so meditative, intuitive, emotional a form as to impart a new, more spiritual, more profoundly poetic temper to our literature.

"The individuals who fixed its precise type, and made it exactly what it was, were Scott, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley."

— *Bascom in "Philosophy of English Literature."*

"Certain ideas relating to mankind considered as a whole had been growing up in Europe for more than a century. . . . These ideas spoke of natural rights that belonged to every man, and which united all men to one another. All men were by right equal, and free, and brothers. . . . All the old divisions, therefore, which wealth, and rank, and class, and caste, and national boundaries had made, were put aside as wrong and useless. Such ideas had been for a long time expressed by France in her literature. They were now waiting to be expressed in action, and in the overthrow of the Bastille in 1789, and in the proclamation of the new Constitution in the following year, France threw them abruptly into popular and political form. Immediately they became living powers in the world, and it is round the excitement they kindled in England that the work of the poets from 1790 to 1830 can best be grouped. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey accepted them with joy, but receded from them when they ended in the violence of the Reign of Terror, and in the imperialism of Napoleon. Scott turned from them with pain to write of the romantic past. Byron did not express them themselves, but he expressed the whole of the revolutionary spirit in its action against old social opinions. Shelley took them up after the reaction against them had begun to die away and re-expressed them. Two men, Rogers and Keats, were wholly untouched by them. One special thing they did for poetry. They brought back, by the powerful feelings they kindled in men, passion into its style, into all its work about Man, and through that into its work about Nature." — *Stopford Brooke in "Primer of English Literature."*

"Of these three poets, Byron and Shelley stand together as poets of the *Age of Revolution*, while Keats, ignoring human interests and shunning those social questions which were still convulsing Europe, luxuriated in the beautiful, if enervating, world which his imagination had created.

"The advance of modern democracy, and those hopes for the future of humanity which came with it, are vital elements in English literature from the latter part of the last century down to our own



day. In the lives of Byron and Shelley, as in those of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, these elements played an important part. But to the older group of poets, whose young eyes saw the fall of the Bastille, the Revolution seemed to promise everything; to the younger, who grew up to witness the downfall of the Republic and the establishment of the Napoleonic despotism (First Consul, 1799; Emperor, 1804), it seemed to have performed nothing. The older group outlived their first disappointment, and settled down with advancing years into a quiet conservatism. The younger, thus early set face to face with a world of disillusion and of blasted hopes, were moved to bitter denunciations or to gloomy forebodings." — *Pancoast*.

"Three men, almost contemporaneous with each other, — Wordsworth, Keats, and Byron, — were the great means of bringing back English poetry from the sandy deserts of rhetoric, and recovering for her her triple inheritance of simplicity, sensuousness, and passion. Of these, Wordsworth was the only conscious reformer, and his hostility to the existing formalism injured his earlier poems by tingeing them with something of iconoclastic extravagance. He was the deepest thinker, Keats the most essentially a poet, and Byron the most keenly intellectual of the three. Keats had the broadest mind, or at least his mind was open on more sides, and he was able to understand Wordsworth and judge Byron, equally conscious, through his artistic sense, of the greatnesses of the one and the many littlenesses of the other, while Wordsworth was isolated in a feeling of his prophetic character, and Byron had only an uneasy and jealous instinct of contemporary merit. The poems of Wordsworth, as he was the most individual, accordingly reflect the moods of his own nature; those of Keats, from sensitiveness of organization, the moods of his own taste and feeling; and those of Byron, who was impressible chiefly through the understanding, the intellectual and moral wants of the time in which he lived. Wordsworth has influenced most the ideas of succeeding poets; Keats, their forms; and Byron, interesting to men of imagination less for his writings than for what his writings indicate, reappears no more in poetry, but presents an ideal to youth made restless with vague desires not yet regulated by experience nor supplied with motives by the duties of life." — *Lowell in "Among My Books."*

## KEATS.

### SIGNIFICANT FACTS IN THE LIFE OF KEATS.

(FROM MASSON'S ESSAY ON KEATS.)

Born in Moorsfields, London, in 1795.

"Son of a livery-stable keeper of some wealth, who had attained that position by marrying his master's daughter and so succeeding him in the business."

Apprenticed to a surgeon.

Came under the influence of Spenser, after reading the *Faerie Queene* (1812). "From this moment it seemed as if Keats lived only to read poetry and to write it."

His friend Mr. Cowden Clarke lent him Chapman's *Homer*, and thenceforward Greek poetry fascinated Keats.

Gave up (1816) attendance at the hospitals (in the capacity of surgeon) and "found more agreeable employment in the society of Leigh Hunt, Shelley, Haydon, Hazlitt, and others whose names are less remembered. In this society of artists and men of letters — forming, so far as the literary ingredient was concerned, the so-called 'Cockney School,' as distinct from the 'Lakists' of the North of England, and from the Edinburgh men who gave both of them their names — Keats at once took a prominent place."

Published, in 1817, a little volume of poems.

*Endymion* appeared in 1818. "Its reception was not wholly satisfactory [censured by the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*], for Keats's was a new faculty which had to create and to educate the taste by which it should itself be appreciated."

1820. Published *Lamia*, *Hyperion*, *Eve of St. Agnes*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

"In the winter of 1819-20 he was seized with the fatal blood-spitting he had long dreaded [Keats's mother and brother had died of consumption]; after a few months of lingering, during which he seemed partly to fight with Death as one to whom life was precious, partly to long to die as one who had nothing to live for,

he was removed to Italy; and there, having suffered much, he breathed his last at Rome on the 23d of February, 1821."

He was buried in the Protestant burial-ground at Rome; his grave is marked by a little headstone bearing his name and age and the epitaph dictated by himself: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

Before reading the essay on Keats, the student should read Forman's edition of Keats's writings; or at least the following selections from Keats's verse: —

Endymion.	* On First Looking into Chapman's
Hyperion.	Homer.
Eve of St. Agnes.	Ode to a Nightingale.
* Ode on a Grecian Urn.	To Autumn.
* The Human Seasons.	* The Mermaid Tavern.
* Ode on the Poets.	

Selected books of reference on Keats: —

Keats. By Colvin. (English Men of Letters Series.)	} (These counter-balance.)
Keats. By Rossetti. (Great Writers Series.)	
Among My Books. By Lowell.	
Macmillan's Magazine. November, 1860.	
Essays on the Poets. By De Quincey. (Unfavorable.)	
Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats. By Masson.	
Spectator, 1848. (Favorable.)	
Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of Keats. By Lord Houghton.	

Tributes to Keats: —

Adonais. By Shelley.
Keats. By Longfellow. (Sonnet.)
Keats. By D. G. Rossetti. (Sonnet.)

"The poems of Keats mark an epoch in English poetry; for, however often we may find traces of it in others, in them found its most unconscious expression that reaction against the barrel-organ style, which had been reigning by a kind of sleepy divine right for half a century. . . . The most profound gospel of criticism was, that nothing was good poetry that could not be translated into good prose, as if one should say that the test of sufficient

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\* Poems in this volume.

moonlight was that tallow-candles could be made of it. . . . In him [Keats] a vigorous understanding developed itself in equal measure with the divine faculty; thought emancipated itself from expression without becoming its tyrant; and music and meaning floated together, accordant as swan and shadow, on the smooth element of his verse. Without losing its sensuousness, his poetry refined itself and grew more inward, and the sensational was elevated into the typical by the control of that finer sense which underlies the senses and is the spirit of them." — *Lowell in "Among My Books."*

PAGE 32, 10-12. "A revival of love for the beautiful culminated in the modern art school. Naturalness had come back with Burns, Cowper, and Wordsworth; intensity and freedom with Byron; then the absolute poetic movement of Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and of that æsthetic propagandist, Leigh Hunt, began its prolonged influence. . . . All in all, if concrete beauty is not the greatest thing in poetry, it is the one thing indispensable. . . . It may be said to symbolize truth in pure form." — *Stedman's "Nature and Elements of Poetry."*

PAGE 32, 21. "The virtue and true labor."

PAGE 32, 25 ff. "Love-letters are not expected to be models of self-regulation and 'the philosophic mind'; they would be bad love-letters, or letters of a bad specimen of a lover, if they were so. Still, one wants a man to show himself, *quâ* lover, at his highest in letters of this stamp; one wants to find in them his noblest self, his steadiest as his most ardent aspirations, in one direction." — *Rossetti's "Keats."*

See Rossetti for Keats's description of Fanny Brawne.

PAGE 33, 26 ff. Compare, "It is an excellent thing for the critic to catch his poet writing prose. He has him then at his mercy. . . . If he is a poor creature, he will be found out; if he has genuine vigour, then, with all allowance for any ungainliness arising from his being out of his proper element, there will be evidences of it. Now, tried by any test of this kind, Keats will be found to have been no weakling. . . . As the aphorisms and casual spurts of speculation of a youth of twenty-two, these, I think, are sufficient proof that Keats had an intellect from which his superiority in some literary walk or other might have been surely anticipated." — *Masson.*

PAGE 33, 33-34. "The literary world was divided more sharply than at any time before or since into hostile factions, and provincial

and political enmities were allowed to bias literary judgments to a degree of flagrancy now almost incredible. There was the *Edinburgh Review* clique under the banner of Jeffrey, and the *Blackwood* clique under the banner of Wilson, and the *Quarterly* clique under the banner of Gifford, and the *Examiner* clique under the banner of Leigh Hunt. Men like Scott and Byron, with their bold, direct, intelligible address to the great body of readers, swept past these guardians of the gates of the Temple of Fame straight to their destination. But if a poet was not easily understood by the multitude, if he needed an interpreter or a sponsor, or a kindly word of introduction, and had not friends in more than one camp, praise from one quarter was more than likely to awaken hostility in every other. There was a jealousy between Edinburgh and London, of which any new aspirant might be made the victim. Hard things were said in the London organs about the Scottish critics, and the Scottish critics, proud of the renown of Modern Athens, asserted themselves in violent denunciation of everything Cockney. No words were too bitterly contemptuous for the Cockney school of poetry; they had an ideal Cockney in their minds, compounded of vulgarity, bad taste, effusive sentimentality, affected prettiness, and they poured the vials of their scornful mockery upon every poem published in London in which there was a suspicion of these qualities. Then there was a political jealousy between Tory, Whig, and Radical, in the interests of which a new poem was sharply scrutinized and cordially welcomed or denounced according to the creed of the reviewer. The *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's*, the champions of Toryism, and the *Edinburgh*, the champion of Whiggery, had an almost equally keen scent for a revolutionary. Any discontent with the established order of things, beyond such discontent as was recognized in the Whig programme, was sure to draw down from the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's* a charge of Jacobinism, atheism, and infidelity, and to insure that the *Edinburgh* should either join in the cry or pass over in silence the work in which the dangerous doctrines appeared. The situation was still further complicated by purely literary factions, factions based on difference of literary creed. By 1818 the reverence for the traditions of the eighteenth century had been rudely shaken; but there were still among the critics a good many who shook their heads over modern innovations and sighed for the good old style. The new edition of Pope had given an occasion for comparing the old with the new, and Gifford of the *Quarterly* was a bigoted, hard, and vehement supporter of

Pope, ever ready to launch out with all his energy of invective against unexpected novelties. . . . Keats suffered from the same accidents in the literary situation as Shelley; he was a friend of Hunt's, and a Cockney, and a rebel against the traditions of Pope, and these facts intensified the bitterness of the *Quarterly* and the *Blackwood's*. And his assailants had a taunt to level at him such as they could not use against the son of a baronet . . . ; 'Johnny' Keats, as *Blackwood's* delighted to call him, had been a surgeon's apprentice, and was the son of a livery-stable keeper." — *Minto's "Literature of the Georgian Era."*

[This criticism of Keats is to be found in the *Quarterly Review*, April, 1818. For a brief, yet clear, explanation of the Artificial School of Poetry (Pope, the head), see any *History of English Literature*. Addison's essay *Ned Softly the Poet* humorously characterizes this school.]

PAGE 34, 21 ff. "Neither sensuousness alone, however, nor sensuousness governed by a reflective and fanciful intellect, will constitute a great poet. However highly endowed a youthful poet may be in these, his only chance of real greatness is in passing on, by due transition and gradation, to that more matured state of mind in which, though the sensuous may remain and the cool fancy may weave its tissues, as before, human interest and sympathy with the human heart and grand human action shall predominate in all. Now, in the case of Keats, there is evidence of the fact of this gradation. . . . Even in his earlier poems one is struck not only by the steady presence of a keen and subtle intellect, but also by frequent flashes of permanently deep meaning, frequent lines of lyric thoughtfulness, and occasional maxims of weighty historic generality." — *Masson*.

PAGE 35, 1. Lord Houghton: English statesman and author.

PAGE 35, 14. Probity: tried virtue or integrity; uprightness.

PAGE 37, 24 ff. Which is in the ascendancy to-day, prose or poetry? Reasons? Dangers?

PAGE 38, 33-34. In *Blackwood's*, Keats was almost invariably spoken of as "Johnny Keats."

"It is," *Blackwood's* says, "a better and wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop, Mr. John, back to plaster, pills, and ointment-boxes, etc. But, for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry."

PAGE 38, 35. "At that time, the conveyance between London and



such suburbs as Hampstead and Highgate was not by omnibuses passing every five minutes, but by the old stage-coaches, with their guards and horns, coming and going leisurely twice or thrice a day. In those days, therefore, Hampstead and Highgate were still capable of having an individuality of their own, and of having associations fixed upon them by the occupations of their residents, even though these were in London daily, and were, by their general designation, properly enough, Londoners. Part of their celebrity now, indeed, arises from associations thus formed. . . . At the particular time of which we are now speaking, Leigh Hunt was living at Hampstead, where also lived Mr. Armitage Brown, a retired merchant of literary tastes, and others of whom it is not necessary to take note; and there, in the evenings, at the houses of such men, artists and others would drop in; . . . from that time, with scarcely an exception, Hampstead was the London home of Keats. . . . As Wordsworth and his associates had received from their Edinburgh critics the name of 'the Lakists,' so . . . the others, instead of being called 'the Cockney Poets,' might have been named the Hampstead Heath-ens." — *Masson*.

PAGE 39, 1. "The false Keats, whom Shelley hated and Byron despised, would have been, had he ever existed, a thing beneath compassion and contempt. That such a man could have had such a genius is almost evidently impossible." — *Swinburne*.

PAGE 40, 25 ff. "If the words sensuous and sentimental were intended in an opprobrious sense, the remark might be useful; but if they are used in the literal meaning, and then contrasted with intellectual and spiritual, their tendency is to withdraw the reader of Keats from the main characteristics of his poetry. The beauty that Keats pursued, whether or not we call that beauty 'truth,' was loveliness. . . . I imagine that Mr. Arnold's intention in drawing the distinction that I have quoted was to lay stress on the fact that the loveliness on which Keats's heart was set was not a meretricious loveliness, but a loveliness that was great and noble and pure. Still, it was a sensuous loveliness in this meaning, that more than any other poet he aimed at and succeeded in depicting in words the beauty that painters put on canvas and sculptors chisel in marble." — *Minto*.

[For the relation between painting and poetry, see Lessing's *Laocoon* — translation.]

PAGE 40, 33 ff. Compare Emerson's "Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not."

"For Nature beats in perfect tune,  
 And rounds with rhyme her every **rune**,  
 Whether she works in land or sea,  
 Or hide underground her alchemy.  
 Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,  
 Or dip thy paddle in the lake,  
 But it carves the bow of beauty there,  
 And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake."

PAGE 41, 5-6. Brooke says: "His painting of Nature is as close, as direct as Wordsworth's; less full of the imagination that links human thought to Nature, but more full of the imagination which broods upon enjoyment of beauty."

PAGE 41, 26-27. Did inheritance and early environment help to "baffle"?

PAGE 42, 10. Meaning of the word "let"?

PAGE 42, 17 ff. "We can hardly be wrong in believing that, had Keats lived to the ordinary age of man, he would have been one of the greatest of our poets. As it is, though he died at the age of twenty-five, and left only what in all does not amount to much more than a day's leisurely reading, I believe we shall all be disposed to place him very near indeed to our very best." — *Masson*.

PAGE 42, 19-20. "He never beheld an oak tree without seeing the Dryad." — *Hunt*.

PAGE 42, 23. Hybla, an ancient town of Sicily famous for its honey.

PAGE 43, 4. The Agamemnon of Æschylus, Greek dramatist. See poem by Landor; translations by Plumptre, Browning.

PAGE 43, 5, 6. Endymion: a beautiful youth, beloved by the moon-goddess.

Hyperion: the sun god; incarnation of light and heat.

PAGE 43, 5-6. Hales says of *Endymion*: "This poem, with all its many faults, gave unmistakable signs of genuine poetic power, and of aims and strivings of the loftiest order." And of *Hyperion*. "*Hyperion* is a hopeful advance upon *Endymion*. The flowers do not lie so tanglingly thick there; the pathway is not encumbered with them; one is not choked with sweet odors; one's eyes are not dazzled and blinded with a monstrous blaze of colors. Clearly, he was gathering a better understanding of his art. The Apollo of whom he had sung so sweetly but so wildly, was revealing himself to him, the Muses were becoming known in their serene, not showy beauty, draped gracefully, not in any garish colors."



Byron says of *Hyperion*: "It seems actually inspired by the Titans."

PAGE 43, 14-17. "Keats, on high and recent authority, has been promoted to a place beside Shakespeare." — *Swinburne*.

PAGE 43, 23 ff. "What Keats above all things wanted was a wise education. Perhaps for no man that ever lived would the thorough study of 'the Classics,' especially of Greek literature, have been more beneficial. With Greek art, as far as he knew it, he deeply sympathized. . . . There was in him the keenest sense and enjoyment of beauty; and this gave him a fellow-feeling with the great Greek masters. He recognized in them the most perfect representatives of the beautiful, and this, so far as literature went, through translations. . . . But it was only one side of Greek art that he saw. He saw its beauty; but he did not see its purity, its self-restraint, its severe refinement. He did not learn from it that the fancy must not be merely indulged." . . .

"But who would part with what he has left us, let the faults be what they may? No works of our literature are more truly poetical, none more completely carry one away into an ideal realm, where worldly noises come to the ear, if they reach it at all, subdued and deadened; none breathe out of them and around them a more bewitching countenance." — *Hales*.

What is the central thought of the essay?

Do you note any characteristic of Matthew Arnold?

Do you find any statements contradictory of the tenets of the essay on *The Study of Poetry*? Any which reiterate what has been said in the essay on *The Study of Poetry*?

What opinion do you form of the man Arnold?

How does Matthew Arnold's prose conform to his theories regarding prose, as given in the essay *The Study of Poetry*, lines 775 ff.?

What are the topics treated of in the essay?

Prove or disprove the following statements: —

"Keats had an instinct for fine words, which are in themselves pictures and ideas." — *Lowell*.

"Matthew Arnold's criticism is hard to answer." — *Burroughs*.

"Matthew Arnold dwells upon the *soul*, not at all on the *body* of poetry." — *Cranch*.

"Arnold clearly shows us the manhood of the man." — *Swinburne*.

"The ethical standard which Arnold proposes as the test of the highest poetry is narrow and arbitrary." — *Courthope*.

## WORDSWORTH.

Significant Facts in Life of Wordsworth. 1770-1850.

Precocious Imagination.

Education in Cambridge. (Degree, 1792.)

Sympathy with French Revolution.

Poet-Laureate of England. 1843-1850.

Retired Life in Lake Country. 1799-1850.

— *From "Nineteenth Century Authors."*

Selections from Wordsworth which ought to be read before reading the essay: —

### *Lyrics.*

My Heart Leaps Up.

The Affliction of Margaret.

\* To the Daisy.

The Solitary Reaper.

Yarrow Unvisited.

Yarrow Visited.

Yarrow Revisited.

\* The Daffodils.

\* To a Butterfly.

### *Sonnets.*

On the Sonnet.

\* Milton.

\* Nuns Fret Not.

Casual Incitement. } Eccles.

Glad Tidings. } Sonnets.

Alfred.

\* London from Westminster Bridge.

\* The World Is Too Much with Us.

\* A Poet! He Has Put His Heart to  
School.

\* Toussaint L'Ouverture.

### *Ballads.*

\* We Are Seven.

Lucy Gray.

### *Narrative Poems.*

Hartleap Well.

Vaudracour and Julia.

Ruth.

Michael.

Peter Bell.

The Sailor's Mother.

### *Reflective Poems.*

Resolution and Independence.

Lines Written above Tintern Abbey.

The Fountain.

The Poet's Epitaph.

To the Spade of a Friend.

\* Ode on Intimations of Immortality.

Thanksgiving Ode.

Laodamia.

Excursion (last half of Book First).

Ode to Duty.

\* Character of the Happy Warrior.

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\* Found in this volume

*Wordsworth's Contribution to His Own Biography.*

The Prelude. (Read at least last half of Book First.) (An excellent annotated edition by George.)

Some of the Lyrical Ballads (at least a few should be read): —

A Night-Piece.	Expostulation and Reply.
We Are Seven.	* The Tables Turned.
Anecdote for Fathers.	Complaint of a Forsaken Indian
The Thorn.	Woman.
Goody Blake and Harry Gill.	The Last of the Flock.
Her Eyes Are Wild.	The Idiot Boy.
Simon Lee.	Lines Written above Tintern Ab-
Lines Written in Early Spring.	bey.
To My Sister.	The Old Cumberland Beggar.
A Whirl-blast from behind the	Animal Tranquillity and Decay.
Hill.	Peter Bell.

Books of Reference for a further study of Wordsworth: —

Papers of the Wordsworth Society. 1880.

Harper's Magazine, February, 1881.

English Men of Letters Series.

De Quincey.

Masson in North British Review, August, 1850.

Fortnightly Review (Pater). January-June, 1874.

Studies in Literature. — *Dowden*.

History of English Thought in 18th Century. — *Stephen*.

Century Magazine, January, 1884.

Studies in Wordsworth. — *Hudson*.

Essays. — *Aubrey De Vere*.

Biographia Literaria. — *Coleridge*. (Chapters IV., XIV., XVII., XVIII., XIX., XX., XXI., XXII.)

Essays and Reviews. — *Whipple*.

Theology in the English Poets. — *Brooke*.

*Knight*.

*Symington*.

Dorothy Wordsworth. — *Shairp*. ("Wordsworth was in nothing more fortunate than in this, that so unique a companion should have been ready to devote herself to him with an affection wholly free from egoism or jealousy — an affection that yearned only to satisfy his subtlest needs, and to transfuse all that was best in herself into his larger being." — *Myers*.)

[Adapted from Hodgkins' *Nineteenth Century Authors*.]

## WORDSWORTH'S POETICAL CREED.

"The imagination of the youthful poets, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey, all in the impressionable years of opening manhood when the Revolution began, was fired by the idea that the world was being made anew. They trod the earth in rapture, their eyes fixed upon the vision of the dawn. . . . A spirit of change was in the air which showed itself in many ways. In England it expressed itself in a more positive reaction against much that was hollow and artificial in the life and literature of an earlier time. The longing for something natural and genuine became the master passion of the new leaders of thought. Not only does the new love of nature and of man inspire the poetry of Wordsworth and of Coleridge, they are the leaders of a deliberate attack on the artificial poetic manner exemplified in the poetry of Pope. Wordsworth came determined to destroy the old 'poetic diction' and set up a simpler and truer manner in its stead." — *Pan-coast*.

"Wordsworth's Preface to his *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 is a great landmark in the history of poetry, because it woke people up to a consciousness of the change that had taken place, and compelled critics to define their position in the face of that change." — *Minto*.

"In striking contrast with the restless, passionate life of Byron stands the peaceful, uneventful life of Wordsworth. Instead of furious, tormenting passions, there is a self-posed, peaceful life of contemplation. Byron imparted to the beautiful or sublime scenes of nature the colorings of his turbulent thoughts and violent emotions; Wordsworth brought to mountain, stream, and flower the docility of a reverent and loving spirit. His soul was open to the lesson of the outward world, which to him was pervaded by an invisible presence. In his pride and misanthropy, Byron felt no sympathy with the sufferings and struggles of humanity. His censorious eye perceived only the foibles and frailties that lie on the surface. With a far nobler spirit and a keener insight, Wordsworth discerned beauty and grandeur in human life, and aspired to be helpful to his fellow-men." — *Painter*.

"The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things

should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature; chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust), because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborate expressions. . . . It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. . . . They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance; their affections are kindred, and almost identical, not necessarily differing in degree; Poetry sheds no tears 'such as Angels weep,' but natural and human tears; she can boast of no essential ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of Prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both." — *Wordsworth in Preface to second edition of "Lyrical Ballads."*

Select from the above three definite poetical canons.

## THE LAKE POETS.

Read De Quincey's *Society of the Lakes* in his *Literary Reminiscences*, also "Wordsworth" in *Studies in Literature*, by Morley.

"It was owing to an extraneous accident, and not on the ground of any resemblance in their character or in their poetic principles, that they (Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey) were spoken of in their lifetime as forming a school nicknamed the Lake Poets. Three men more dissimilar could not have been found — Wordsworth, absorbed in a definitely conceived poetic mission, living solely for it, day after day, and year after year, alternately opening his mind with wise passiveness till an inspiration should seize it, and working with strenuous vigor when the inspiration came; Coleridge, dreamy, speculative, aimless, rich in poetic and philosophic projects, but poor in perseverance, an inspired creator of splendid fragments, paving with good resolutions the way to slender achievements; Southey, a man of immense intellectual energy and copious literary faculty, but no distinctive genius, a ready and indefatigable writer, full of ambition and self-confidence. . . . The lives of the three ran in channels that diverged more and more as the streams lengthened. They were too different in character ever to have formed a school. Their poetic ideals were different. . . . It was, in fact, in a review of *Thalaba* (by Southey), in the first number of the *Edinburgh Review*, in 1802, that the existence of the Lake School was proclaimed to the world. The reviewer had probably heard that all three poets were domiciled in the Lake Country, and, looking to the obtrusive irregularities of *Thalaba* and the startling paradoxes of Wordsworth's poetic gospel, it was natural, perhaps, that he should jump to the conclusion that this band of brothers had retired from the world to work out in secluded companionship the doctrines of the Preface." — Minto in "*Literature of the Georgian Era*."

PAGE 44, 1 ff. Note the text from which Arnold starts.

PAGE 44, 12 ff. "Of Wordsworth's work it may confidently be said that outside the pages of the *Biographia Literaria*, no fair and philosophical inquisition into its merits was made in the author's



early days — none perhaps in which either the premises were not palpably irrational and the deductions illegitimate, or the keenness and asperity of the damnatory style employed were not such as to excite suspicion of the criminal intrusion of personal insult. Quarter after quarter, month after month, week after week, Wordsworth was, for many years, arraigned with a malignity which no diversity of poetic taste could explain; and which could only be grounded on the distempered state of the moral associations of his critics." — *T. Hall Caine in "Cobwebs of Criticism."*

PAGE 44, 1-18. "On Wordsworth's exact position in the hierarchy of sovereign poets, a deep difference of estimate still exists among the most excellent judges. Nobody now dreams of placing him so low as the *Edinburgh Reviewers* did, nor so high as Southey did. . . . Coleridge deliberately placed Wordsworth 'nearest of all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton, yet in a kind perfectly un-borrowed and all his own.' Mr. Myers, also a poet, . . . talks of 'a Plato, a Dante, a Wordsworth,' all three in a breath, as stars of equal magnitude in the great literary firmament. To Mr. Swinburne, on the contrary, all these panegyric estimates savour of monstrous and tolerable exaggeration." — *Morley in Preface to edition of "Wordsworth's Poems" (Macmillan, 1893).*

PAGE 44, 26. See *Prelude*, Book Sixth — *Cambridge and the Alps* — for Wordsworth's tribute to Coleridge.

"Nearly everything great that Coleridge wrote was written during the year of his companionship with Wordsworth; so, it would seem that the debt was not all on one side."

PAGE 45, 7. "It is round the two small lakes of Grasmere and Rydal that the memories of Wordsworth are most thickly clustered. On one or the other of these lakes he lived for fifty years." — *Myers.*

PAGE 45, 13 ff. "Yet he was not the less bound to be in his turn the victim of a new evolution of taste and thought. . . . Wordsworth in the long run began to seem unsatisfying. His defects were more clearly seen. The need of a wider thought, of a more brilliant fancy, was felt. This was the moment for the rehabilitation of two poets who had both died in the flower of their age, unknown or disdained, some twenty years earlier. Shelley and Keats in their turn became prophets and leaders of schools. . . . Keats and Shelley have certainly not been thrown into the shade by Tennyson; but it is equally certain that Tennyson has climbed on their shoulders, and has, in some respects, reached a higher level." — *Scherer.*

PAGE 46, 20. Goethe [gû tē], German author. 1749–1832.

PAGE 48, 6. Anti-Gallican: opposed to what is Gallic or French.

PAGE 48, 7. Corneille': French dramatic poet of 17th century.  
Victor Hugo: French poet and author of 19th century.

PAGE 48, 26–27. Samson Agonistes: drama by Milton.

PAGE 48, 33. Renan': French author and critic of 19th century.

PAGE 49, 15 ff. This conclusion is reached after Arnold has well balanced the faults and the virtues of the poet.

PAGE 50, 2. "By classing Molière among the great poets, Arnold sinks the poetic form in the thought."

PAGE 50, 21 ff. Compare Morley: "We are not called upon to place great men of his stamp as if they were collegians in a class-list. It is best to take with thankfulness and admiration from each man what he has to give. What Wordsworth does is to assuage, to reconcile, to fortify. He has not Shakespeare's richness and vast compass, nor Milton's sublime and unflagging strength, nor Dante's severe, vivid, ardent force of vision. . . . But Wordsworth, at any rate, by his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, has the skill to lead us, so long as we yield ourselves to his influence, into inner moods of settled peace, to touch 'the depth and not the tumult of the soul, to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure.'"

PAGE 50, 34 ff. "In *The Excursion* we forget the poverty of the getting up to admire the purity and elevation of the thought." — *Taine*.

"The Fourth Book of *The Excursion* is the most magnificent poetical confession anywhere to be found of that Authentic Theism which, including as it does a loyal devotion to all the personal attributes of God, whose providence governs His world, by necessity finds its complement in Christianity — that Christianity so zealously asserted in Wordsworth's maturer poetry and so obviously implied in the whole of it." — *Aubrey De Vere*.

PAGE 51, 29 ff. "We recognize two voices in him, as Stephano did in Caliban. There are Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch. . . . Wordsworth's better utterances have the bare sincerity, the absolute abstraction from time and place, the immunity from decay, that belong to the grand simplicities of the Bible." — *Lowell*.

PAGE 52, 1 ff. Compare opening lines of Walter Pater's essay on Wordsworth.

PAGE 52, 12 ff. "To classify poetry, for example, Arnold adopts the Greek system; not because it is Greek, but because it is 'natural,'



elemental. For the constituents of a true poem, he turns again to the Greek, as did Goethe and Coleridge, for the same reason. What Arnold takes from Greece, Greece took from nature herself, — the ‘natural truth.’” — *Cheney*.

See also *Hebraism and Hellenism*, in Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*.

PAGE 54, 12. Voltaire: French philosopher and author. 1694–1778.

PAGE 54, 24 ff. Compare “When we are told that the distinguishing merit of such poetry as we find in Keats’s ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ is that it gives us, of all gifts in the world, the expression of a moral idea comparable with the gravest and the deepest utterances of Shakespeare and of Milton, we begin to perceive, or at all events we begin to suspect, that Mr. Arnold’s excursive studies in theology have somewhat infected him with the theologian’s habit of using words and phrases in a special and extranatural sense which renders their message impervious, their meaning impenetrable, to all but the esoteric adept. . . . A certain criticism of life, a certain method or scheme of contemplation, a devotion to certain points of view and certain tones of thought, may unquestionably be discerned in the highest work of such poets as Milton, Wordsworth, and Shelley, in the past; in our own days, of such poets as Lord Tennyson, Mr. Browning, and Mr. Arnold himself. But how this fact can possibly be shown to imply that it is this quality which gives them rank as poets; and how the definition of this quality can possibly be strained so as to cover the case of Keats, the most exclusively æsthetic and the most absolutely non-moral of all serious writers on record; these are two questions to which the propounder of such postulates may surely be expected to vouchsafe at least some gleam of a solution, some shadow of a reply.” — *Swinburne’s Miscellanies*.

PAGE 55, 12–14. Discuss this statement.

PAGE 55, 32. RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM.

THE ASTRONOMER-POET OF PERSIA.

[Translated by Edward Fitzgerald.]

\* \* \* \* \*

“Before the phantom of False morning died,  
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,  
‘When all the Temple is prepared within,  
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?’

"And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before  
The Tavern shouted — 'Open then the door!  
You know how little while we have to stay,  
And, once departed, may return no more.'"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,  
Before we too into the Dust descend;  
Dust unto Dust, and under Dust, to lie,  
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and — sans End!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing,  
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing;  
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,  
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

"What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence*?  
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence?  
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine  
Must drown the memory of that insolence!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil round  
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"And much as Wine has played the Infidel,  
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour — Well,  
I wonder often what the Vintners buy  
One half so precious as the stuff they sell."

PAGE 57, 1 ff. "According to Mr. Arnold's theory, Gautier could be proved an incomparably greater poet than Keats. There is not a line extant by the author of *Endymion* which shows even a glimmer of such simple and cordial manliness of sympathy with the homely heroism and humble interest of actual life as informs every line of Gautier's noble little poem on two veteran survivors of the Old Guard, seen hobbling along the streets of contemporary Paris; a poem which combines in no small measure the best qualities of Wordsworth with the highest qualities of Byron." — *Swinburne*.

PAGE 58, 6. From the context, get some idea of Mr. Leslie Stephen.

PAGE 58, 16 ff. "Wordsworth was familiar, even formally, with the best philosophical ideas of his time. Witness *The Excursion* :

" 'While my voice proclaims  
How exquisitely the individual Mind  
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less  
Of the whole species) to the external World  
Is fitted : — and how exquisitely, too —  
Theme this but little heard of among men —  
The external World is fitted to the Mind ;  
And the creation (by no lower name  
Can it be called) which they with blended might  
Accomplish : — this is our high argument.' "

PAGE 58, 22-24. "This is the first thoroughly right thing said about Wordsworth, the first thoroughly right note sounded in his praise, that ever has touched the key in which the final judgment of the future will express its decision in favour and in honour of this great and misappreciated poet. His earlier disciples and believers all were misled by their more or less practical consent to accept Wordsworth's own point of view as the one and only proper or adequate outlook from which to contemplate the genius and the work, the aim and the accomplishment of Wordsworth. Not that he did wrong to think himself a great teacher ; he was a teacher no less beneficent than great : but he was wrong in thinking himself a poet because he was a teacher, whereas in fact he was a teacher because he was a poet." — *Swinburne*.

PAGE 60, 25 ff. Do you think this a good picture ? Does it harmonize with the rest of the essay ?

PAGE 61, 23 ff. Swinburne thinks "The Sailor's Mother" the finer success of the two — more pathetic, effective, simple.

PAGE 62, 1-2. "By this Wordsworth meant that poetry ought to have in it something spontaneous, that one ought to feel in it sentiment rather than reflection, the spurt from the inner fount rather than will and design." — *Scherer*.

PAGE 64, 5. *sincereness*. Criticise this word.

PAGE 65, 18. "The Wordsworthians were a sect, who, if they had the enthusiasm, had also not a little of the exclusiveness and partiality to which sects are liable. The verses of the master had for them the virtue of religious canticles stimulant of zeal and not amenable to the ordinary tests of cold-blooded criticism. Like the hymns of the Huguenots and Covenanters they were songs of battle no less

than of worship, and the combined ardors of conviction and conflict lent them a fire that was not naturally their own." — *Lowell*.

"If Arnold's estimate of Wordsworth be just — and who will gainsay it? — we owe him a debt smaller only than that due the poet himself. It required a mind open as the poet's own, a spirit as responsive to the rhythmic beat of universal life, to see and know him as he is; it required the ability that distinguishes Matthew Arnold as a critic." — *Cheney*.

"French and German critics find it hard to treat this *dictum* [Matthew Arnold's, which 'gives up about four-fifths of Wordsworth's verse as of little permanent value'] with seriousness, but it appeals strongly to the insularism and conservatism of the English mind." — *Syle's "From Milton to Tennyson."*

What does this essay show as the fundamental principles of criticism, according to Arnold's standard?

What is the central thought of the essay?

What principles laid down in the essay *The Study of Poetry* are put into practice in this essay?

How does Matthew Arnold *convince* his readers?

What claim has he (judging from this essay) to be called the Apostle of Sweetness and Light?

Do you think the critic is justified in saying that Arnold has an overabundance of sweetness?

What are the main topics of the essay?

Discuss these statements: —

Poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, — the speech in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth.

We cannot improve upon the Greeks in their classification of poetry.

We demand something in our poetry which the ancient poets can never give.

## ARNOLD'S POEMS.

### RUGBY CHAPEL.

PAGE 67. Rugby, a famous "prep" school of England. Matthew Arnold's father, Dr. Arnold, was for many years the beloved headmaster of this school. Read *Tom Brown at Rugby* by Hughes for a splendid picture of Dr. Arnold and of school life in England.

Paraphrase the first two stanzas of this poem.

What is the main thought of the poem?

**austere**: harsh; stern.

**buoyant**: light-hearted; not easily depressed.

PAGE 68. **Tarriest**: lingerest; delayest.

**zealous**: ardent in the pursuit of an object; enthusiastic.

**Succorest**: aidest.

PAGE 69. **eddy**: v. to whirl; n. a small whirlpool.

**oblivion**: the state of being blotted out from memory; forgetfulness.

**gorges**: narrow passages between mountains or hills.

PAGE 70. **Havoc**: wide and general destruction; devastation.

**gaunt**: pinched and lean.

**taciturn**: reserved in speech.

**avalanche**: mass of snow, earth, and ice descending swiftly from a mountain; anything that overwhelms.

PAGE 72. **Bluster**: noisy, self-asserting talk.

**cringe**: bend or crouch from fear or with servility.

**arid**: dry; parched.

**myriads**: indefinitely great numbers.

### DOVER BEACH.

"Like Wordsworth, Arnold loved the sublime calm of nature as opposed to the turmoil of human life, but he did not find nature so full of moral meaning as Wordsworth did."

If, as has been said, this poem is characteristic of Arnold's prevailing mood, what should you judge that mood to be?

**PAGE 73. Dover :** the Strait of Dover lies between England and France ; Dover is opposite Calais.

**PAGE 74. Sophocles :** a Greek tragic poet. He lived from 496–406 B.C.

**Aegean :** a sea between Asia Minor and Greece.

**turbid :** muddy ; thick ; disordered.

### THE FORSAKEN MERMAN.

Legends about mermaids and mermen have been extant for centuries—among the inhabitants of Norway, the British Isles, China, Iceland, Peru, among the American Indians, and many other peoples.

The word *mer* comes from *sea* (L. mare ; O.E. mere).

Baring-Gould in *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages* gives an excellent account of the many mermaid legends. See also Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England* ; "The Mermaid," in Scott's *Border Minstrelsy* ; Rhys's *Welsh Fairy Tales*.

Find in Arnold's poem as many as possible of the popular beliefs (or the characteristics) of these sea-people.

Find, or originate, the reason for the origin of the mermaid myth, remembering that "Ignorance is the parent of Superstition."

Defend or condemn the wife's action in this poem.

**PAGE 77. leaded panes :** panes of glass set in or covered with lead.  
**spindle :** the long thin rod in spinning-wheels used for twisting the thread.

**PAGE 78. sorrow-laden :** painfully burdened with sorrow.

**amber :** a yellowish fossil resin found on the shores of the Baltic.

**heaths :** bare, flat, waste tracts of land.

**broom :** yellow-flowered shrub.

**blanch'd :** made white ; the color taken out.

### BALDER DEAD.

**PAGE 79. Balder :** son of Odin and Frigga ; God of light and peace, and of the good, the eloquent, the wise ; killed by the contrivance of Loki.

**Frigga (Frea)**: the Earth-goddess; wife of Odin.

**Lok (Loki)**: spirit of evil.

**Valhalla**: the Heaven of those who died in battle.

**PAGE 80. Edda**: collection of ancient Icelandic poetry.

**Hoder**: blind; killed Balder.

**skulls**: ancient northern drinking-cups.

**Odin**: the All-father.

**PAGE 81. Nornies**: the fates (three in number).

**Sleipner**: the best of all horses.

**Lidskialf**: palace of Odin.

**Midgard**: fortress built by the Gods against the giants, for men to dwell in.

**Lapps**: noted for witches, wizards.

**PAGE 82. boar Serimner**: serves as meat for the heroes; is like the "widow's cruse of oil."

**Valkyries**: virgins who served the heroes in Valhalla.

**Asgard**: the city of the Gods.

**Fensaler**: the palace of Frigga.

**PAGE 83. Hela**: death (English, "hell," to hide).

**PAGE 84. Bifrost**: bridge from Heaven to earth.

**Heimdall**: watchman of the Gods.

**PAGE 85. Niflheim**: "the house of mist."

**PAGE 86. Breidablik**: "broad splendors."

**runes**: letters of earliest Teutonic alphabet, used especially by Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons; sometimes the poetry written in these mysterious letters.

**PAGE 88. Scald**: bard, singer.

**PAGE 91. Skulda**: the Fate who presides over the future.

**Igdrasil**: the greatest of trees, spreading over the whole world; under it the Gods meet in judgment every day.

**Gladheim**: the hall of the Gods.

**Thor**: God of Thunder.

**PAGE 96. Fenris**: the wolf; son of Lok.

**PAGE 97. Muspel**: southern land of fire and brightness.

PAGE 102. **Freya** : Goddess of Love and Beauty.

PAGE 103. **Regner** : a somewhat mythical hero.

**Brage (Bragi)** : first of scalds (bards).

PAGE 104. **Aslauga** : daughter of Sigurd, Icelandic hero.

PAGE 107. **Bor, sons of** : Odi, Vili, Ve.

PAGE 114. **Vidar** : the Silent ; next in strength to Thor.

**Tyr** : War-God.

Note the meaning of these terms not found in the poem :

**Forset (Forseti)** : son of Balder and Nanna.

**Glitner** : Forset's hall in high Heaven.

**Midgardworm** : the great Serpent ; lies at the bottom of the ocean.

**Saga** : ancient Scandinavian legend, tale, history.

**Sigurd** : the hero of the Volsunga Saga.

**Vali** : son of Odin and avenger of Balder.

**Volsunga Saga** : an Icelandic Legend.

Note the customs mentioned in the poem.

Select five impressive lines or passages.



## KEATS' POEMS.

### ODE ON A GRECIAN URN.

Select passages worth remembering.

Describe (or draw) the Urn.

What words and thoughts suggest Greece with its culture, art, and customs?

**PAGE 117.** **Sylvan**: of the woods.

**Tempe**: a beautiful vale in Thessaly, Greece.

**dales of Arcady**: in Greece; noted for contentment and rural happiness.

**pipes**: musical instruments used by shepherds.

**timbrels**: small hand-drums or tambourines.

**PAGE 118.** **sacrifice**: an offering of animal life to a deity.

**Attic**: of Athens or Attica.

**brede**: braid, embroidery.

**pastoral**: poem portraying rural life.

### ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

Chapman translated Homer's *Iliad* into English.

**PAGE 118.** **fealty**: fidelity; loyalty.

**Apollo**: god of poetry and music.

**PAGE 119.** **demesne** (de-mān'): landed property; estate.

**ken**: knowledge.

**Cortez**: Spanish conqueror of Mexico. Keats mistakes him for Balboa who discovered the Pacific Ocean.

**surmise**: suppose; conjecture; guess.

**Darien**: a district of Panama (Isthmus of Panama).

### THE HUMAN SEASONS.

**PAGE 119.** **lusty**: full of life and vigor.

**span**: reach, grasp.

**ruminare**: meditate; chew over.

**furl (eth)**: roll up and secure to something.

**misfeature**: ill or distorted feature; bad feature.

**forego**: renounce; refrain; give up.

Give an abstract of this poem.

### THE MERMAID TAVERN.

This tavern was the famous inn at which Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and other dramatists used to meet frequently.

**PAGE 119. Elysium**: dwelling-place of happy souls after death.

**PAGE 120. Canary wine**: wine made on the Canary Islands.

**venison**: flesh of an animal of the deer kind.

**Robin Hood**: a famous legendary English outlaw, who lived in Sherwood Forest.

**Maid Marian**: in Robin Hood legends, Robin's sweetheart, who followed him into banishment as a page.

**bowse**: drink; carouse.

**horn**: a drinking cup, originally made from the horns of cattle.

**astrologer**: one who professes to forecast events by means of the stars.

**Zodiac**: an imaginary broad belt in the heavens containing the twelve constellations or signs of the Zodiac, one of the signs being Virgo, the Virgin.

### ODE ON THE POETS.

An ode is a poem expressive of lofty sentiment, and is usually of exalted style and enthusiastic tone.

**PAGE 120. parle**: to talk; to speak.

**PAGE 121. Dian's fawns**: Diana, goddess of the chase. Hence the association with her of woodland creatures.

**philosophic**: wise.

**cloying**: satiating; surfeiting; wearying by richness.

**maim**: mutilate; wound or disfigure; cripple.

**bards**: Celtic minstrels; poets.

# WORDSWORTH'S POEMS.

## SONNETS.

A sonnet is a lyric poem complete in fourteen lines. It is written in iambic pentameter and has a definite scheme of rhyme, a b b a a b b a c d e c d e being a common form.

### *A Poet.*

A criticism of the artificial school of poetry, popular in the first half of the eighteenth century, with Alexander Pope as its chief exponent.

In this connection read "Ned Softly" in Addison's *Spectator*.

### *The World Is Too Much with Us.*

PAGE 123. **Proteus**: a sea-god who had the power of changing his shape.

Is there any thought in this sonnet applicable to people to-day? Why should we turn more to nature?

**Triton**: a sea-god, son of Poseidon (Neptune).

### *Nuns Fret Not.*

This poem was written to overcome prejudice against the sonnet.

PAGE 123. **Furness-fells**: hills near Wordsworth's home.

### *London.*

Written in 1802, "the year of the peace of Amiens, by which England made peace with Napoleon, surrendering all her recent conquests. Wordsworth felt that England was disgraced by a humiliating peace, endured only because of a fear of high taxes."

What qualities of Milton, shown during the Civil War in England and in this sonnet, would have helped England in 1802?

PAGE 123. **fen**: low, marshy or flooded tract of land.

### *Composed upon Westminster Bridge.*

This bridge crosses the Thames in the heart of London.

Select pictures which remind you of familiar scenes.

*To Toussaint L'Ouverture.*

A Haitian negro, general, liberator, and martyr. Born in 1743 and died in 1803.

Paraphrase this sonnet.

## WE ARE SEVEN.

Wordsworth tells here of an actual experience.

Note the "heaven-taught wisdom of the child."

Compare with the passage from the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality."

## THE TABLES TURNED.

The poet believes that the mind requires time for repose and for thought.

What are some of the things that Nature teaches?

## CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WARRIOR.

Here the poet gives the traits of his brother John, who went down with his vessel; and also of Nelson, who perished at Trafalgar.

What sentiments of this poem have been voiced of late in our Americanization work?

PAGE 129. **placable**: easily appeased; mild; forgiving.

**mannas**: spiritual nourishment. See Exodus xvi.

PAGE 130. **master-bias**: master (chief) influence; prejudice.

## TO A SKYLARK.

"Shelley soars with his skylark in rapt abandonment; Wordsworth remains upon the ground, and connects his skylark with the earth and with the life of man."

Prove or disprove the statement above.

Note whether the meter of the two poems (Shelley's and Wordsworth's) reflects the authors' moods.

PAGE 131. **sloth**: laziness; indolence.

**loth**: disinclined; reluctant; unwilling; loath.

**moors**: extensive tracts of waste land covered with heaths.

## ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY.

The poet said: "A pre-existent state has entered into the creed of many nations . . . I took hold of the notion as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet."

State the thought of this excerpt in your own words.

## TO A BUTTERFLY.

**PAGE 133. my sister's flowers:** Dorothy Wordsworth "soothed her brother's disappointment over the failure of his plans in regard to the French Revolution; she reminded him of the world of nature in which alone he was at home; and she quietly showed him where his power lay."

**sanctuary:** place recognized as holy.

## THE DAFFODILS.

Dorothy Wordsworth records in her journal: "I never saw daffodils so beautiful (when we were walking in the woods beyond the Park) . . . they tossed and reeled and danced as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake."

Note Wordsworth's doctrine that "the origin of poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity."

**PAGE 133. milky way:** luminous band of countless stars encircling the heavens.

**PAGE 134. jocund:** merry; sprightly.

## TO THE DAISY.

Note Wordsworth's belief that Nature ministers both to moral and spiritual power.

The thought that Nature "consoles, inspires, rewards, and recreates does not appear in poetry prior to this (Wordsworth's) time."

**PAGE 134. dappled:** variegated; spotted.

**PAGE 135. sprightly:** brisk; animated; vivacious.

**appellations:** names; titles.

**Cyclops:** a one-eyed giant in mythology.

**boss:** protuberance; round metal knob or stud on center of shield or ornamental work.

**cleave:** stick fast; adhere.











